

# **Horizon**

**A REVIEW OF LITERATURE AND ART**

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*by ANTHONY COTTERELL*

**MUSIC: SOME ASPECTS OF THE  
CONTEMPORARY PROBLEM—I**

*by EDWARD SACKVILLE-WEST*

**TESTIMONY AND TRUTH**

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## CONTENTS

	PAGE
COMMENT	365
THE SATIRIST	366
THE MIXER	366
MAN AND WOMAN	367
THE CHILD	367
PERFECTION	368
JIGSAW	368
COMPLETELY IN THE AIR	369
MUSIC: SOME ASPECTS OF THE CONTEMPORARY PROBLEM—I	382
TESTIMONY AND TRUTH	393
ECCENTRICS OF EIGHTEEN-THIRTY—II	402
WHERE SHALL JOHN GO? V—SYRIA	424

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## COMMENT

THIS number of HORIZON appears during one of the decisive battles of the world's history, a battle which may remove for ever that scourge of Europe which has destroyed as much happiness as smallpox or syphilis, the German will to power. No people can sustain more than three or four attempts at world domination, and it is probable that in the next century the German menace to the world will seem to our grandchildren quite unsubstantial. But for our world it has been terribly real; Bismarck, the Kaiser and Hitler have made three generations of Europeans miserable. That curse of the German temperament, their mass inferiority complex, the fear of freedom which leads them to welcome servitude for themselves that they may the better enforce it on others, has retarded all human progress, and three times in seventy years has thrown the world back into savagery. Now at last the stranglehold of all that is greedy, brutal, fearful and stupid in one country is about to be broken and its crimes against the human spirit to be avenged. It is a moment when every civilian forgets the past months of anxiety, impatience and boredom and can think only of the present operations and of the men who are risking their lives in them. Every word in fifty numbers of HORIZON has gone uncensored, every idea and opinion unrebuted, because these men have fought for our liberties in what is still the freest country in Europe.

At the beginning of the war our relations with the armed forces were very close, gradually they have drifted. For as their new careers take hold we have received fewer and fewer contributions from them which are up to our standard, while in consequence we have ourselves become something of a backwater. Now in this crucial summer of the twentieth century our common hope has reunited us. At last the mists are going to lift, the ten-year nightmare finish, Himmler's fat handshake, Hitler's putty face 'like a dirty plate' will survive only in waxworks; once again, as at Salamis, the peoples who value liberty are about to bring down ruin on those who have despised it: we shall return to Europe to draw strength from the continent we have set free until the full tide of our Western civilization flows back over the scattered dried-up rockpools that every nation has become, to set them all breathing and moving again in the cool element of which they have so long been deprived.

*LOUIS MACNEICE*

## THE SATIRIST

Who is that man with the handshake? Don't you know;  
He is the pinprick master, he can dissect  
All your moods and manners, he can discover  
A selfish motive for anything—and collect  
His royalties as recording angel. No  
Reverence here for hero, saint or lover.

Who is that man so deftly filling his pipe  
As if creating something? That's the reason:  
He is not creative at all, his mind is dry  
And bears no blossoms even in the season;  
He is an onlooker, a heartless type,  
Whose hobby is giving everyone else the lie.

Who is that man with eyes like a lonely dog?  
Lonely is right. He knows that he has missed  
What others miss unconsciously. Assigned  
To a condemned ship he still must keep the log  
And so fulfil the premises of his mind  
Where large ideals have bred a satirist.

## THE MIXER

With a pert moustache and a ready candid smile  
He has played his way through twenty years of pubs,  
Deckchairs, lounges, touchlines, junctions, homes,  
And still as ever popular, he roams  
Far and narrow, mimicking the style  
Of other people's leisure, scattering stubs.

Colourless, when alone, and self-accused,  
He is only happy in reflected light  
And only real in the range of laughter;  
Behind his eyes are shadows of a night  
In Flanders but his mind long since refused  
To let that time intrude on what came after.

So in this second war which is fearful too,  
 He cannot away with silence but has grown  
 Almost a cypher, like a Latin word  
 That many languages have made their own  
 Till it is worn and blunt and easy to construe  
 And often spoken but no longer heard.

*STEPHEN SPENDER*

MAN AND WOMAN

Through man's love and woman's love,  
 Moons and tides move  
 Which fuse those islands lying face to face.  
 Mixing in naked passion,  
 They who naked new life fashion,  
 Are themselves reborn in naked grace.

THE CHILD

'You dream,' he said, 'because of the child  
 Asleep in the nest of your entrails, whose dreams  
 Flutter through your blood in streams.'

'Baby', her lips dreamt, and he smiled.

He laid his head, weighed with a thought  
 On the sleep of her lips. Thus locked  
 Within the lens of their embrace  
 They watched the life their lives had wrought,  
 The folded future active street  
 With walls of flesh and crowing face,  
 Within her flesh complete,  
 Between their clinging bodies rocked.

## PERFECTION

No one is perfection, yet  
When, being without you, I console  
Myself, by dwelling on some blemish  
In you, once marked, which seems to mar the whole,  
Telling myself your absence might become my wish,

Oh, then, that icy thought I set  
Between ourselves, thaws, shrivels, vanishes,  
When I remember how your eyes  
Lighten often on mine, wonderful skies,  
Melting with forgiveness and gentle wishes.

Arrowy light suffuses mist,  
And lapis lazuli has kissed,  
With burning eyes, a way through cloud,  
Detailing the green valley homes below which seem  
The world illuminated by the dream,  
Love's dazzling head transcendent in a shroud.

## A. S. J. TESSIMOND JIGSAW

This one can understand but cannot act,  
Defeated by detachment and division.  
That one can act but cannot understand,  
Defeated by desire and concentration.  
This one can gain and grasp but not enjoy,  
Defeated by his haste and heat and hardness;  
And that one can enjoy but not acquire,  
Defeated by his softness and self-loving.  
And so the half-man seeks the one he is not,  
The friend or lover moving where he cannot,  
The other terminal, the arc's completion,  
The periscope with which to see round corners,  
The one who still may someday, somewhere, somehow  
Lead him across the frontiers of forbidden  
Land, the world reversed, looking-glass country  
Beyond this bondage and beyond this boredom  
Of this too known, too own world, this round narrow  
Room behind the mouth and nose and eyes.

ANTHONY COTTERELL

## COMPLETELY IN THE AIR

IN a horrified kind of way I had always wanted to go on a bombing raid.

I was to fly with the American Fortresses. First I was sent on a course at a Combat Crew Replacement Centre where they give refresher training to reinforcements newly arrived in this country, and also prepare non-flyers who have to fly for one reason or another.

There were two others in the class, Colonel Jock Whitney, the American millionaire race-horse owner and tycoon, and a young man who was introduced as General Eaker's aide.

The Colonel was youngish and amiable, though naturally not unaccustomed to having his point of view appreciated. General Eaker's aide was volatile and instantly well-informed about almost anything.

The schedule was rigorous and devoted mostly to the .50 calibre machine gun which we were supposed to learn to fire and maintain in case the occasion arose. We worked under a corporal instructor in a gymnasium which had been partitioned into classrooms. For some periods we joined the general class. It was reassuring to find that none of them took notes. I never have much confidence in people who take a lot of notes in lectures. They were all in leather or mackintosh jerkins and were obviously suffering from a sense of anti-climax, having arrived in this country geared for action and being immediately plunged into this end-of-term revision.

'When you hear the term "tail attack" it doesn't mean he's overtaking you. He'll never do that. It means he'll end up at your tail. He's gonna have to follow a curve of pursuit until he ends up dead behind your tail. That's a very common form of attack. With our ships it's usually from above . . .

'How many in here can judge a second exactly every time?' One hand was raised.

'I can do it, but it takes practice,' the instructor went on. 'That's the way to estimate speed.'

B

We were taught how to behave when forced down into the sea. You all go into the radio compartment and pack down on the floor like sardines, sheltering your head in your arms and keeping the knees slightly bent. There is a terrific forward momentum when the aircraft hits the water, and no matter how smooth the sea may be, the water comes up to your waist. There is a considerable jolt on landing and another when she finally settles, so you don't move until she comes to a standstill.

The engineer and his assistant get out first to see that the life rafts have successfully launched themselves from the wings. You all climb in, carrying the emergency radio, and get away quickly; not because of the suction but because of the unpredictable behaviour of the tail when the aircraft breaks up.

Even if the Air Sea Rescue people know your position exactly, it may be thirty-six hours before you are picked up.

We went for an altitude flight, partly at 30,000 feet. There was no particular sensation except a sudden feeling of coldness and a progressive tendency to flatulence.

Next day we went for an artificial altitude flight in the oxygen cabin. There were five of us, the Colonel, the Captain and two strangers. We sat locked in a sort of fortified caravan with white walls and a thick glass panel at the end through which the doctor watched us. He addressed us through a loud-speaker. We sat facing each other as if in a tram. The doctor's amplified voice: 'We'll go up at four thousand feet a minute and come down slower in case anyone has ear trouble.'

In a very short time a mist formed in the cabin. 'You're getting in a cloud,' said the voice. It was appreciably colder; like an autumn morning, though outside the cabin there was heat-wave weather. There was no sound except the persistent tapping of the pumping machine. One man was rather affectedly reading the *New Yorker*. Voice: 'Now we're nearing ten thousand feet. Put your masks on.' A little later: 'Now we're doing twenty thousand, going on twenty-five. Take out pens from your pockets or the ink's liable to leak.' My stomach began to rumble.

Presently, one at a time, we had to take off our oxygen masks, stamp our feet and hands, then write our names as many times as we could before passing out. The rarefied atmosphere feels quite normal without artificial oxygen. That is the danger of

it. You don't realize that you are just going to pass out. I managed to write my name once, but I wasn't conscious of the second attempt, which was a meaningless jumble, tailing off as I lost consciousness. The others managed to write their names two or three times. Evidently I am not the Himalayan type.

There was a great sense of stomach comfort as we descended to 22,000 feet, though a slight painfulness in the ears. The idea is to inoculate people against the temptation to feel that they can do without their oxygen if, say, they want to move about the aircraft. I found it a completely convincing demonstration.

There were many more lectures on the .50 calibre gun.

'Whether it be one gun or a lot of guns, we always do the paper work using similar triangles . . . lock the gun in that position . . . this distance here is  $x$  . . . gives us the distance from the line of bore to the line of sight. . . .'

In lectures you are either bored because you understand what the lecturer is saying or because you don't. (Thought recorded at 1.40 p.m., the afternoon's work starting at 1 p.m.)

The Captain was an intelligent follower. 'I don't see that. How can it be a straight line from the back of the barrel to  $x$ ?'

The Colonel was dogged: 'I missed something there. I'd like to have you go over that again. I didn't quite get it. What I'd like,' he said, 'is a lecture on calibres, the bigger ones, and all that.'

'We don't need that,' said the Captain.

'May as well get ourselves a little free education,' said the Whitney millions.

There was a constant stream of new arrivals from America. At night their voices could be heard in different parts of the hut. One man said that General Montgomery had been made a Lord and would get a great palace and a hundred thousand pounds a year. He regarded it as decadent and feudal.

'But we get as much as an English full colonel as second lieutenants,' said another man. 'I wanna go home, damn it.'

I am now writing down on the miniature range at the far side of the airfield. Our instructor brought the wrong key so we are sitting waiting in the car. It is 8 a.m. 'You've got egg all over your mouth,' said the Colonel to the Captain.

'I'll clean it off with some of that soap from your ear,' riposted the Captain.

Presently the keys arrived and we fired the .50 calibre on the range; it made the most formidable noise.

A week or two later I was sent down to an airfield for the actual excursion. The first opportunity was on the Monday afternoon. They were going to bomb airfields in France.

★ ★ ★

### MONDAY

After briefing, the pilot and I drove round to the aircraft in a jeep. The pilot's name was Sprague; he was ruddy-cheeked and taciturn. The aircraft was parked in a circular bay just off one of the runways, with a group of men working on it. The pilot disappeared to superintend, and I was approached by a young man who said: 'You the navigator? Yelvington's my name. Afraid I'm just a greenhorn. This is my first mission.' I was about to console him that we all have to begin somewhere, when it suddenly occurred to me that my very life might be jeopardized by his green-hornery. Sympathy instantly evaporated. It turned out that he was to act as co-pilot on this mission to give him some experience for operations with his own aircraft.

Presently eight men drove up in a truck, each carrying one or two machine gun stocks. They sat down on the ground and cleaned them. We were each given a packet of Spearmint and a Mars bar. An hour went by before climbing into the aircraft, which felt its way out on the runway at 4.45 p.m.

I sat in the nose surrounded by guns and ammunition upon a sort of counter normally used by the navigator who was sitting on a box of ammunition studying his maps with a pair of dividers. The compartment was bullet-nosed, mostly of glass, and filled with belts of ammunition stored in knee-high wooden frames overflowing rather untidily on to the floor. Right up in the nose the bombardier sat on another case of ammunition making adjustments on an instrument panel.

I will now switch into the present tense because most of this was written in the aircraft.

The whole thing is in a state of frenzy and vibration and uncomfort. Not at all in keeping with the spectator's view of the way a bomber seems to drift into the air; it makes me apprehensive about my stomach.

The ships are crawling towards the take-off point like great

bats in the sunlight. I was suddenly alarmed that I had left my parachute behind. It was handed to me to keep on my lap. No room elsewhere. Both young men are very preoccupied. I feel oddly light-headed. There seem to be no arrangements for being sick. No sign of the paper bag provided by commercial air-lines. One of the three enormous machine guns is banging about uncomfortably near my head, which it hits from time to time. Now we are moving. Just passing the ambulances. I think it would be more tactful to keep them out of sight.

I just can't get myself to dwell realistically upon the possible outcome of this afternoon. Logically you know it may well be disastrous, but one is cushioned by an inane optimism.

We are flying just to the right and behind the leading ship. In the air the bats look like newts.

'If I use this gun, scram back there, Major,' said the navigator, 'and if I use that one, get over there.'

A pleasant sense of fatalism comes over me. The business of not being bothered by responsibility or having to make decisions. There is nowhere to put anything. Have just put cigarette butt in pocket. Seems a pity to dirty the floor. The bombardier has gone aft so I have a perfect uninterrupted view through the glass nose. A large irregular hole in the glass nose has been patched. Shrapnel, I supposed. Oh dear. The thing about being an Englishman with Americans is that one feels bound to behave with as near an approach to *sang-froid* as is possible. They were rather tactless at the briefing. It hardly seemed the time for the Colonel to complain about the faults in the gunnery, even small ones, or to paint nightmare pictures of the vulnerability of loosened formations.

I am not tremendously over-dressed. Just a summer flying suit over boots and an American jockey-cap. In fact the others are wearing more than I am; and with my low blood pressure. The navigator is still doing advanced geometry. No one tells me anything. I hope I am pulling my weight. I just noticed fifteen other Fortresses out to the right. Probably been there quite a while. A splendid observer I make. We are approaching a solid bank of cloud. The land below is disappearing. It is just like suddenly finding yourself in the Arctic. There is another formation of eighteen on our left.

Navigator: 'We are going up now. Put on your oxygen mask. Bombardier, check the Major's oxygen gauge, it don't seem to be working. I can't see it going up and down.'

Some time later the mission was cancelled owing to weather not being clear enough for precision bombing. We turned back for the English coast.

I was surprised to find myself feeling frustrated instead of reprieved; as if I had made an unsuccessful attempt at seduction. All those hours of flying just to turn round and come back; and incidentally that was quicker said than done. We had to fly several hundred miles and then go through all the business of circling round waiting our turn to land. Then when you landed, instead of feeling heroic, you felt plain ludicrous.

We got back about 8 p.m. I ate in the Combat Crew Mess Hall, which was much more rough and ready than the ground officer's mess. The idea of separate messes is to cater for the flyers' eccentric hours. Sometimes they have to eat very early, sometimes very late. By American standards 8 p.m. is outlandishly late for dinner. I went to the movie show. They were showing *Desert Victory*, which was very well received. It was a big hut with backless benches and a far from perfect projector.

Next day, Tuesday, there was another mission.

★ ★ ★

#### TUESDAY

Briefing was at 1 p.m. Much the same as yesterday. You can't go on appreciating the drama of it. It is almost boringly the same if you are not personally concerned with the details. The main excitement is when you come into the room and see for the first time where you are going. The route is marked with coloured strings and pins on a giant map. Close-up pictures of the target are shown. Details of the route are given. 'Cloudy,' the weatherman, forecasts the clouds and conditions over the target, and the Colonel summarizes the situation and points a few morals, e.g. 'Anything that heads towards you and looks like taking pictures with a flash-light—let him have it.'

The ship was just queuing up to take off when a message came for me to get out. The tyre of the leading ship had a puncture so it couldn't take off, and the Colonel, who was leading the group, was transferring to this aircraft, leaving no room for me. I

clambered out. There was a high wind on the runway produced by the madly revolving airscrews of the ships queued up for take-off. It was difficult to stand up, especially when loaded with parachute, oxygen-mask, life-belt and odd clothing. I found myself and kit standing Chaplin-like beside the queue of bombers waiting to take off. Just then Major Beckett, the good-looking deputy Group Commander, drove up through the wind in a jeep and okayed the idea of my getting on the next ship but two. I got in just as it was moving off and sat with the waist-gunners while the ship threw itself along the runway and up into the air. Then I made my way forward and found myself enclosed in the bomb-bay, stuck between two iron frameworks loaded with bombs. The doors were shut on either side and I had a general sense of taking part in an Abbott and Costello chase.

But the new nose was roomier. It was more open. The ammunition had been used to furnish the place with more care. I seemed to have interrupted something. The navigator was reading the *News Chronicle*, and the bombardier a Penguin book. I was given a box of ammunition to sit on; unfortunately it had no lid and was not fully loaded, so I was suspended.

Through my headphones I can hear the arrangements of getting the formations fixed. I can see more aircraft than yesterday, because this ship is further back in the formation. There are nine Forts immediately ahead, four out of the left hand window, and eighteen out of the right. Presently will come the problem of whether to let go or retain one's chewing gum when donning the oxygen mask.

Later. Am now wearing mask; nothing has happened, nothing to do but watch the little red ball bobbing up and down between the gauge to show the oxygen is working all right.

Sample conversation on the inter-phone:

'Ball gunner to navigator. Ball gunner to navigator. Over.'

'Carry on, ball gunner.'

'What's that ship out on the right?'

'Must be part of another formation.'

'Tanks. I just wanted to know.'

Pilot: 'We are coming right in on the English Channel now.'

The navigator and pilot keep saying numbers.

Just over Beachy Head. The ship is bumping about a little. The

bombardier is having trouble with his 'chute, he cannot get it on. They are testing the guns which make pleasantly little noise against the noise of the plane. We are now over Dieppe. The navigator and bombardier have suddenly busied up. The compartment suddenly seems much too small and my presence quite unwarrantable. I am kneeling, which is very appropriate and most uncomfortable. Crouched sitting on my right heel I cannot see a thing, being diffident of getting in the way. I am trying to take a look, but whenever I get to the window there is nothing in sight. The folly of all this becomes more apparent minute by minute. I wish I had brought my flak under-pants. I cannot move forward without getting in the way, and I cannot move back because I am nearly at the end of my oxygen tube tether. Parts of my body feel very hot, parts very cold. Presently I find a way of half-lying which still further restricts the view but reduces intense muscular fatigue. The weather is wonderfully sunny. We have just passed a crippled fighter being escorted home by four others. The navigator and bombardier look like the Wright brothers leaning forward in this apparently frail glass case sprawling among the maps and ammunition.

We skirted Paris. You could just make out the Eiffel Tower. It was exciting to see it.

The formation out to our left was going through a heavy flak barrage; little bursts of dark brown smoke all around them. One of their aircraft fell away, having been hit. Presently there were some little bursts in our formation. I tried not to care. The maddening thing was that the pilot didn't seem to make any effort to go any faster or dodge about. We just mooned drearily forward.

Dotted all over the sky were groups of aircraft, bombers, fighters, American, British and some German. They all plunged purposefully along about their different business. It was like a sort of market day or a lot of people hurrying to work. There wasn't any particular sense of massed power; even the aircraft just ahead looked quite small and innocuous, though their guns were roaming across the sky. It seemed absurd to think of all the work and organization which had gone to bring each one of these groups to fly here this sunny afternoon.

I gave up trying to see out of the window, and after a while

I became attuned to the circumstances with a sense of satisfaction which I felt must be soon punctured by something.

And no wonder I was beginning to feel serene. I found that we were back over England, having got to the target but again been unable to drop bombs because of thick clouds. I there and then determined that, come what may, I would be present at the dropping of at least one bomb on enemy occupied territory. I felt that someone was trying to make a fool of me. The crew felt the same though they were consoled to some degree by the fact that the excursion counted as one of their operational tour.

★ ★ ★

#### WEDNESDAY

The weather was too bad for anything but training.

#### THURSDAY

Here we are again sitting in the nose of another aircraft, but with the same navigator and bombardier that I started with the first time. These ships vary quite a bit in design. The ammunition boxes are built differently. There is a minimum of room in this ship. The engines have just started; we are a bit late owing to something wrong with the bomb-bay doors. I remembered to bring along an air cushion. Today we are supposed to go to an airfield by Saint Nazaire. As we started I bumped my head sharply against a gun.

I seem to have been doing this for months. There is no sensation of excitement, although there has been during the day. I am not awfully comfortable and have to crouch down to avoid being hit on the back of the head by this gun, and sit with my feet out of alignment. My two companions don't talk much. I write industriously in the hope that they will be deluded into thinking I am making a significant record of this matter. The weather is not good at all, being cloudy. Another group of Forts has just passed by the window.

The navigator is using a pair of dividers on a map of the Brest area. The rear gunner has just come crawling up through the hatchway to borrow a blanket, having very injudiciously forgotten to bring the connecting plug for his heated suit. It is really wonderful up here. The sky is a lost-horizon blue. It doesn't seem likely that one could come to any harm. I found I had not eaten my Mars bar from the previous time. I ate it. Too quickly.

I am sure it is a mistake not to prolong one's pleasure. I am trying to remember what to do in the way of First Aid if one of these men gets wounded. Have just put on my oxygen mask. You get used to it very quickly, though you notice it when you move about; you can only move in a very restricted range. To show my new confidence I have just put a stick of chewing gum into my mouth, lifting my mask to do so.

Later. I have just found myself thinking how sad it would be if I were killed. Sudden picture of my family opening the little bag with my things in it sent back to them by the Americans. I wonder what they would do with the American cigarettes and the orange I picked up off the floor during this morning's lecture by an R.A.F. sergeant. Would they eat the orange, or keep it as a souvenir? I have just a faint feeling someone is squeezing my intestines. I suppose it is the elements of the bends that afflict people in high altitudes. I found myself wishing we could be shot down in a comfortable way, and have a comfortably exciting escape, but this mood is quite different from the ideas I had over France on Tuesday when we were passing through flak; the folly of it all was then uppermost. These young men are very reassuring to be with. There is no resolute determination; on the other hand, no frivolity; just deadpan. There are ships in front and on either side, but one doesn't seem to derive any support from being with so many. Each ship seems strictly on its own for the purpose of self-preservation. The bombardier has just put on his winter coat. There is some kind of draught somewhere, and 25,000 feet is no height for a draught. I have just asked where we are, and we are approaching the English coast. Shortly afterwards we passed by the Channel Islands. They looked very small from our height.

Slight doubt by the pilot as to whether we are being led back to England. We have been turning to the right or Atlantic for some minutes.

Sure enough, we were going home again. Talk about sicken-ing. Immediately the incentive evaporates you feel tired, bored and cold.

\*       \*       \*

#### FRIDAY

I was called at 2.15 a.m. by a blood brother of Humphrey Bogart. Briefing was at 2.30 a.m. We were going to the same

target as Tuesday. Breakfast was quite something—an orange, cornflakes, bacon and two eggs.

Out in the darkness some of the ships had lights in their noses, which made them look more like insects than ever. There was about an hour and a half before take-off. You have a tremendous feeling of worth-whileness; the new day is not going to be wasted as far as you are concerned. The dawn did not break, it flowered into an anti-climax of coloured mists.

I am riding behind the pilots. They are conducting a testing dialogue. 'Oil pressure coming up 4,' says one. 'Oil pressure coming up 4,' says the other. Both pilots suddenly rub their faces with burnt cork. I ask and learn that this is to reduce the sun glare, which is very intense at high altitudes. The testing process continues as we queue up to go off. The pilot throttles up each of the four engines in turn, announces 'No. 1 checked. O.K.' etc.

We are airborne at 6 a.m. The co-pilot calls out the speeds as we race along the runway. 'Fifty, sixty, seventy,' at 130 we rise.

The top turret gun is just behind me. The gunner: 'See them cracks in the wind screen? That's concussion from firing. That's about the sixth set of windows we had in.'

The pilot suddenly reaches up over my right shoulder and fires a Verey light. Down below or the ground is shrouded in mist like a Mongolian ghost world. The turret gunner and I lean over the pilot's shoulders. Two faces decapitated by the high backs of their seats. Both monotonously chewing gum. Things happen, time passes, slower when you are standing up. There are some thirty dials in front of the pilots. The only one I understand is a clock which is 2 hours 25 minutes slow. These Americans refer to light mist as fog.

He has just fired another signal. It is for identification purposes, with so many bombers in the air. The group leader fires them a signal getting to France and again at the beginning of the bombing run, and at bombs away. In general when a ship fires one, it is a distress signal, asking for fighter support.

I am standing with my feet apart, each on a narrow ledge with a hatch below me. The turret gunner points out the door through which we entered. 'Learn how to use that door. Pull the red handle, the door falls from you, get out head first; feet first you are liable to hit your head on the door with wind resistance.' My stomach is playing me up a little. Standing makes

you more conscious physically, so I sat down and read a chapter of Eric Ambler's *Cause for Alarm*. This plane is called the Black Ghost. The pilot has just fired another signal. Each time the turret gunner reloads the pistol.

Turret gunner: 'That's a funny sector, we're going. First time we lost five ships, then we went three times over and hardly see a thing. Then we have fighters and flak everywhere. Now today I don't know what we are going to have.'

The ground is hazy, but the aircraft are sharply defined in the sunlight, as if each one had an individual coating. I can see six ships, four out ahead, one alongside, one behind. The propellers from this angle seem to lollipop over lazily and irregularly. We are approaching a snow-like cloud bank. It is like crawling up a shore. Air speed is 150. The ships each rise and fall all the time, but it is not noticeable inside. The group ahead are just flying up a valley between two banks of cloud; there almost seems to be a danger of crashing against the clouds. I don't know whether it's a tribute to Eric Ambler or cowardly escapism, but I keep wanting to read that book instead of concentrating on the situation. We are approaching the French coast. 'Chutes on. Also wearing flak helmets. The other day mine was too small, now I have one that is too big. The guns have been tested and the pilots have suddenly become more watchful. If I lean back at all the turret catches me in the back, and, when revolving, starts to drag me round, so I have to hang on in a sort of fly-like position to the back of the pilot's seat. Well, here is France. How the hell I can get out of all this paraphernalia if necessary, I don't know. I suppose he will be firing the Verey light again. I feel nervy at the prospect of this mild explosion. One or two other things may explode, come to think of it. We are going over Dieppe. I can see a lot of our fighters, I am glad to say. I wish they would cuddle up a little closer. I am holding my flak helmet above my eyes like a man holding on to his hat in a high wind. I must look a B.F., standing here trying to write notes, hoping something will happen, and hoping it won't.

It's 8.30 a.m. and I am suddenly conscious of cold toes. So is the pilot apparently, he keeps on stamping his feet. We have started turning. If we don't drop bombs this time I shall resign. I wrote 'Are we going home' on a piece of paper and handed it to the co-pilot, who wrote 'If we don't find this target we will get another.'

Up above you can see fighter trails. There seems to be a dog fight going on. This approach is interminable. The thing just seems to go steadily forward with no sense of straining to get there and away. Just as I write that, flak starts up everywhere. It is much fiercer than the other day. Little black, pointed, flat toadstools dispersing into fantastic tree shapes. It jumps up all round like jack-in-the-boxes. The formation ahead of us is passing through a barrage. You can't hear anything except the normal roar of the plane. The guns have just started working for some reason. Their stuttering makes the ship shudder, but it is nothing like the alarming noise they make when you fire them on the ground. You cannot hear much except the noise of the plane; if you listen you seem to hear explosions like punctures, but it might be imaginary noises in the ear. The shadow of the turret guns keeps passing back and forth across the cockpit. I look out for fighters. We are now west of Paris. Apparently we have been cruising round Paris for quite a time. You can see the Eiffel Tower. Now we are in another flak barrage. They seem to fire a great number of rounds. My face is painful as the mask is too tight; my feet are cold; I don't think we are going to drop the bloody bombs. I try to scratch my nose, but of course scratch the mask. I am getting pretty tired and fed up. There are some enemy fighters out to the right. Three or four little specks. They don't seem capable of doing anybody any harm. I know it is silly, but you cannot seem to work up any strong feelings. Then the guns started; tracers spouted out from the nose and I caught sight of an enemy fighter out in front. There seemed to be tracers pouring into it, but it wasn't discouraged, it hung there rather uncertainly, and then little stabs of flame appeared as it fired at us. It dived off past the right window. Two others did the same thing. Somehow they were not particularly frightening, not so frightening as the flak, because you are conscious of their being much smaller than you, and driven by someone in the same condition of being in a strange element, whereas the flak comes up directed at you by a lot of people with nothing else to do. You feel something in common with a man who is also in a contraption thousands of feet above the earth, but the men on the safe ground below are very definitely on the other side of the counter. At this point I rather naively inquired what had happened to the plane on our left. Apparently it had been shot

down, but I had not noticed it. A few seconds later I saw a Fortress diving down on its own. You knew that inside it there were ten men faced with the immediate prospect of death, but this idea was oddly unimpressive; not nearly so fascinatingly horrible as, say, the sight of a man being marched off to jail.

Presently we turned and the formations broke up into a line, one plane behind the other, for the bombing run. You couldn't bomb in formation without bombing the aircraft flying below.

As each bomb drops a red light flashes on the panel in front of the pilot. Afterwards the formations rally as quickly as possible and make for home. Apart from a little flak and the pilot's heel becoming frostbitten we didn't have any more trouble.

We got back just after 11.30 a.m. I haven't often felt so good.

*EDWARD SACKVILLE-WEST*

## MUSIC: SOME ASPECTS OF THE CONTEMPORARY PROBLEM

### I

MUSIC is a sphinx whose riddle is never solved. Yet, with the appearance of any new composer of substance, the sphinx asks her questions again: Why do you love me? What is my flesh? My heart? My brain? How does my blood flow? And because she is invisible, we cannot answer. Between her and us stretches a dark sky; the silent atmosphere which is music's medium. The stretched drum, the taut string, the pursed lips, the tiny slot of reed, the lifted baton, the poised finger: all are images of that extreme tension without which the sphinx cannot make her presence felt, her voice heard.

All this, no doubt, is poetry of a kind, like Rilke's 'Music, breath of statues'. But a poetic description can be as exact as a scientific one, or as a logical definition; the difference lies in the region of the mind appealed to. Remaining, for the present, in the poetic region, I would observe that the architectural metaphor

has always seemed to me unsatisfactory as an image of musical effect. I emphasize *effect*, since, from the point of view of the mechanics of composition, the structure of any art, being concerned with form, calls to mind at once the one art which exhibits its dependence on form at every level. But for an analogy of the effect of music I prefer that of the dark sky mentioned above, which gradually becomes patterned by a counterpoint of stars, in all degrees of brilliance and definition; now flowering in swift clusters, then again spaced in slow succession, rising or falling; near and vivid accents in the invisibly drawn outline of some earthly shape, or so far and so many as to seem a cloudy background to the others; yet all a-tremble with the wiry singing of light, across and across the infinite stave of the sky. In some constellations—the Plough, Orion, Cassiopeia—the notes are arranged in a tune one recognizes. Far more often the combinations are not ‘given’ at all, but depend upon the accidents of vision and of fancy.

Now this night, being imagined, is in our head: it *is* our brain, and the stars are the nodes in it which become connected by a train of thought. The physical processes of cerebration remain extremely obscure, but it seems probable that an elaborate kind of telephone exchange must occur within the skull in order that ratiocination should take place at all. I suggest, therefore, that the outline thus ‘spelt out’ in the material of the brain by the process of experiencing an idea or an image is the same as that followed by the successive notes of a melody, or the shifting of a harmonic process, that seems to us to express the emotion appropriate to that idea or image. This is, of course, mere speculation; but the fact that (to take only two instances) certain successions of sixths have so constantly been resorted to by composers to suggest solitude or sadness, and certain successions of thirds to suggest sweetness or affection: this fact (and it is easy to verify) does, I think, suggest that these things are not as fortuitous as they seem and that a physical answer to the sphinx’s riddle must exist. But even if this theory of a brain-graph should contain truth, it takes us no further towards solving a much deeper mystery, viz. the ability of the human mind to transcend the temporal flux, and therefore to be at one and the same time itself and more than itself. So ancient a problem would not be worth while mentioning here, were it not that music provides a very vivid—

perhaps the most vivid—illustration of it. For, unlike other artistic *percepta*, such as pictures or architecture, music is presented to the mind dissolved in the temporal fluid itself. Yet the length which a given piece of music takes to move through the mind is never equal to the emotional length which it is felt as displaying. This last, be it shorter or longer than the actual duration of the piece, is inevitably felt as a spatial relation—inevitably, because it runs, so to speak, at right-angles to the physical continuum and thereby constitutes a second dimension.

This phenomenon is to some extent involved in the appreciation of other arts, as for instance in the discrepancy between the specious length of an episode in a novel and the time it takes us to read that episode, and again in the ‘spatial’ effect of a poem. But in both these examples we are up against other factors than that I have ascribed peculiarly to music. In the case of the novel, the management of the time sequence is one of the cardinal problems of the art, which makes no appeal whatever to the eye; and it is a matter of common knowledge among novelists that, for instance, a very great span of time—especially if filled with significance—cannot be satisfactorily conveyed except by consuming a relatively large amount of the reader’s actual time.

Where poetry is concerned, the same rule does not apply; for, by stealing some of the effects of music and allying them to verbal meaning, verse is able to achieve a far more elastic manipulation of specious time than prose can. Here, too, the visual effect of a printed poem must be taken into account; few modern readers are aware how greatly the shape of a poem on the page, the differing lengths of the lines, variations of type (capitals, italics, roman) and so on, contribute to the emotional impact they are receiving.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> The recent controversy over the use of ‘background’ music in broadcasts of poetry has thrown light on this aspect of the subject, showing clearly how ignorant even poetry-lovers are of the important function played by the printed page in contributing to poetic expression. No rules can be laid down for a procedure as yet so experimental as poetry spoken into the microphone; but it has been my experience that in cases of blank verse, heroic couplets, and kindred metres, where the aspect of the page is homogeneous, the lines do not vary in length and the form is not stanzaic; in such cases the voice is usually sufficient to carry the full burden of the poetry, whereas, in the case of highly lyric or rhapsodic poetry, or verse couched in metrically elaborate stanzas, the use of a discreet musical ‘frame’ is clearly indicated. Listeners who object to this practice would, I suggest, cease to find it vexatious if only they would not try to separate the music from the verse in their minds. When you

The two-dimensional aspect of music is best seen in opera, because there the emotional and intellectual content is more obvious than in 'pure' music, where the specious time may go unperceived by the more inattentive type of listener. An act of an opera, taking, say, fifty minutes, may include, without omitting any of them, a series of events covering, say, ten hours of specious time. The word commonly used to cover this feat of compression is 'form', and although music can never, at any phase of its development, have been able to dispense with form, it is clear that those aspects of it which correspond to perspective in painting and which enable music to convey specious time by artifices of duration, were originally instinctive and none too successful. Such improvisation as was permitted to the singers of Plain-song, for instance, is little more than the raw material of music; it is as a tape measure pulled out to a certain length and then left. Gradually a sense of form—i.e. a sense of the relation of specious time to duration—began to be imposed by artistically sensitive persons, until, at the turn of the sixteenth century, the emergence of the arioso displays clearly the first conscious attempt to convey an emotional sequence by means of a musical device which foreshortened that sequence in the interests of intensity. This was not very adroitly done: even Monteverdi sprawls somewhat, and in his ariosi it is the stately beauty we admire, rather than any skill in the building up of an emotional effect—which, indeed, is there at the onset. This music is curiously static—as much so, I think, as modern Tzigane music. But the latter is for every other reason odious and would hardly be mentioned in this context except to show the dangers that result from allowing an improvisational technique to run away with composition.

But the arioso is an essentially operatic unit. This brings us back

look at a picture you are aware of the frame as setting off the canvas and isolating it from the wall; but you cannot concentrate on both picture and frame simultaneously. In the same way, when listening to broadcast poetry, it is always the *words* which should be kept in the foreground of the attention, while the music is allowed to enclose the verse and outline its shape. If this is impossible, then the music is either inappropriate or wrongly balanced. There is nothing inherently vulgar or catchpenny in the use of music with poetry, which is as old as the world; but the procedure being admittedly a delicate and difficult one, it is seldom followed with propriety.

C

to the form which first compelled composers to consider the problem of specious time. For a complex dramatic form like opera involves three distinct kinds of unit, all of which juggle with duration according to dramatic necessity. There is the aria, or the concerted piece, the object of which, being the exhibition of an emotional state, is to suspend the action by prolonging the duration far beyond what is necessary merely to express the emotion in words. There is recitative, which in its strictest form (*recitativo secco*) virtually reduces the two kinds of time to an equality, so that a piece of dialogue which in life would take six minutes to speak, takes six minutes of operatic time. And finally there is the purely dramatic music, which usually conveys a considerable specious time through a movement that telescopes the actual duration of the event described.

For a century and a half composers of opera were content with this threefold division of the form, which on the whole worked well. Its drawback was a certain lack of homogeneity, a tendency which, in the feebler cases, led to a real absence of cohesion. This can be seen by comparing, say, *Cosi fan Tutti* with Cimarosa's *Le Astuzie Feminili*, or *Der Freischutz* with Lortzing's *Undine*; and at a later date Verdi's *Un Ballo in Maschera* with Berlioz's *Beatrice and Benedict*. The *Zeitgeist* will have felt that something radical must be done; and produced Wagner.

The revolution wrought by Wagner in the harmonic field has tended to obscure his equally important and thorough handling of the problem of specious time—a problem which was, of course, to him a cardinal one. Complete homogeneity of the musical stuff, always in the interests of dramatic immediacy, was the aim of this powerful, though not always very sensitive, imagination; in effect it ended by amalgamating the operatic units into an infinitely elastic kind of arioso which (like fugue) is at this stage of its evolution a texture rather than a form. The old units can still be detected (though already in process of disintegration) in *Lohengrin*; they are almost resolved in the first two operas of *The Ring*, and completely so in *Tristan*. Once the new musical-dramatic texture had been achieved, the problem of form presented itself anew, since the old units were no longer there to relay the action. With the

intuition of genius, Wagner solved this problem by adapting and extending the experiments in sonata form contained in the great works of Beethoven's final period—the sonatas and string quartets rather than the orchestral works. The third act of *Tristan*, for instance, is in fact an enormous first movement of a symphony, with first and second subjects, development, recapitulation and coda. The huge scale alone prevents the casual listener from being aware of this fact, which Alfred Larenz has exposed with so much skill.

This wholesale reconstruction of operatic form enabled Wagner (and after him others) to compose on a scale hitherto undreamed of and at the same time to confer on these vast works more than a semblance of unity. So that what Wagner meant when he spoke of opera's being 'the art of transition' was this: how to solve the relation of duration to specious time in dealing with so large and complex a unit as the act of an opera—and beyond that the opera as a whole. In cases of this kind, failure may tell us more about the problem than success, and it is those acts and scenes of his later operas where Wagner fails to hold our attention, or holds it only with difficulty, that best reveal the limitations of his method; for it is in the miscalculation of the time factor, not in the quality of the music, that the error lies. I think it is not generally realized that, for instance, the real reason why we find it so difficult not to fidget during the last scene of *Tristan*, Act II, is not because we have been emotionally exhausted by the love duet, still less because the music of the last scene is in any way feeble or uninteresting, but because the events—emotional and actual—with which it deals are improperly represented by the duration of the music, both in its smaller units and in the aggregate. The same criticism is true of the scene between Wotan and Brünnhilde in *Die Walkure*, Act II—though here the miscalculation is less grave. Readers can supply other examples for themselves; it will no doubt occur to them at the same time that the most gifted of the later exponents of Wagnerian dramatic methods, Richard Strauss, has shown himself a good deal more adroit in the handling of the time problem than his master. When he fails, it is in the quality of the music, never in the conveyance of specious time. *Die Frau ohne Schatten*, which deals in units of all sizes within a very

massive framework, is in this one aspect an even more conspicuous success than *Der Rosenkavalier*.<sup>1</sup>

In other countries, the operatic solution was slower, partly perhaps because a more delicate sense of form, in France and Italy especially, may have made a change seem unnecessary. Yet, however much we may enjoy *Carmen*, *Aïda*, or *Eugen Onegin*—and not to enjoy them would be devilish—I think it is possible to feel some little dissatisfaction with the ‘continuity’ of any given act. Neither Bizet nor Tchaikovsky was master of operatic transition, such as Wagner became; and even Verdi neglected this aspect of his art until late in his career. From this point of view alone *Otello* could be described as Verdi’s *Lohengrin* (the other points of resemblance between the two operas are dramatic, not musical), and I think it is impossible not to feel that *Falstaff* represents a formal advance on *Otello*, magnificent as the latter is.

Within the units themselves—arias, duets, ariosi, and so on—both Verdi and Tchaikovsky were always instinctively right. To take a single example, I know nothing (unless it be the finale of *Figaro*, Act II) to compare, for magical felicity, with the conversation that opens the drawing-room scene in the third act of *Eugen Onegin*. This passage, which leads up to Prince Gremin’s aria, is very little longer in duration than the spoken words would be; yet the music, flowing in and out of and around the words, holding them in the graceful paraphs of the waltz, has the effect of making the passage seem even shorter than it is—especially in retrospect, after the long arrest created by the Prince’s aria.

I instance this passage because it happens to be a favourite of mine; others will recall their own favourites in the work of Verdi, Massenet, Nicolai, and even Gounod. But when a composer of the highest genius feels it possible to throw an opera together as

<sup>1</sup> Another factor which must be taken into account in following the management of specious time in nineteenth-century music, is the development of orchestration. Beethoven may be said to be the first composer who was interested in orchestration for its own sake (i.e. for reasons not purely musical) and his example was very quickly followed. The evolution of the modern orchestra, between 1800 and 1914 (when the classical reaction set in), was directed towards an ever-increasing amplification of the means of poetic expression. The results were various and must be judged separately; but it will be obvious that so considerable an accretion of orchestral resources must imply a change in the methods whereby specious time was calculated, whether the music was overtly dramatic in character or not.

Moussorgsky did with *Boris Godounov*, it is clear that a change of method is needed. For that reason Wagner must be said to have won this particular round; but his solution was ideal only within the framework of music-drama as he and the heirs of his tradition conceived it. The reaction from Romanticism, in the years between the first and second German wars, involved a reconsideration of specious time in opera, and with it a partial return to pre-Wagnerian methods of composition. At all events, a work like Berg's *Wozzeck* already derives some of its intensity and perfection of dramatic timing from the composer's adherence to strict symphonic forms in the composition of each scene. But even in this case, and in others similar to it, the change applies only to the arrangement of the units; there is no question of going back on arioso as the fundamental stuff of operatic music.<sup>1</sup>

In another fruit of the romantic spirit in music—the symphonic poem—composers have been a good deal less successful in dealing with the problem of specious time than they were in the case of opera. Early experimenters like Berlioz and Liszt did not incur the same risks as later composers in the genre, if only because they confined themselves to a vaguer programme. When it came to telling a story, the case was altered, as some of us know who have attempted to follow Mrs. Rosa Newmarch's analysis of a piece of programme music while the work was in actual progress. We would still be awaiting the 'plaintive oboe phrase' that (we were told) ushered in the lovesick maiden, when the whole work came to an end, leaving us with the rest of the story on our hands. The fault here was not so much with Mrs. Newmarch, whose analysis was correct as far as it went, but with the composer, who had neglected to time the sections of his music so that their duration would correspond with the specious time required by their emotional content.

Most musicians nowadays regard this kind of music as in any case an aberration, and they are probably right in doing so. Its interest in this context, however, is not in its alleged violence to the spirit of the art, but the very extent to which conscious poetry

<sup>1</sup>The recent vogue of 'symphonic' ballet is really an extension of Wagnerian methods of musical continuity to dance sequences. The elaborately dovetailed groupings invented by Massine for ballets like *Symphonie Fantastique* and *Choreartium* bear the same relation to the discreet movements of classical ballet as arioso does to the older operatic units.

may mislead a composer in the handling of form. Nor is an elaborate plot necessary to this kind of failure; any definite sequence of contrasted emotions is a high test, in which only the greatest composers invariably succeed. It takes a Bach or a Chopin to pack into a two-page fugue or a serious mazurka an emotional context of symphonic extent, while no amount of melodic invention or incidental beauty has ever been able to make me feel the length of an entire Schumann symphony as equal to more than one stanza of a simple lyric.

I have devoted a good deal of space to this intricate and abstruse problem, not only because it is of first importance in musical criticism, but because I feel that while inattention to it has been responsible for much that is unsatisfactory in modern music, critics have on the whole been inclined to attribute this entirely to melodic or harmonic ineptitudes—an attitude which, if justified, is inexhaustive. A great deal of music since Wagner has been criticized for excessive length, but without asking *why* it seems too long; on the other hand, few people have been found to complain of other pieces that they were too short. Yet if the one reproach is especially applicable to romantic music, the other is equally the besetting sin of the classical reaction. Who has not felt that Prosper Mérimée's handling of some of his short stories was terse to the point of imponderability? I, for one, have had the same sense of unsuitable brevity in listening to some of the movements in Stravinsky's later works, to the first five Piano Sonatas of Prokofieff, and—quite recently—to the slow movement of Howard Ferguson's fine Piano Sonata. In all these cases, the error, it seems to me, is fundamentally a miscalculation of the specious time inherent in the material, though it is natural that skimpiness should escape censure where nimiety does not, since boredom is more seriously involved in the second than in the first.

## II

WHAT can usefully be said about a picture or a piece of music always breaks off short at the actual contemplation, during which the whole range of impressions, values, beauties, is received by the spirit. It is at these moments that criticism ceases. One would take it all the way, if one could, for complete illumination. But the sight, or sound or whatever, fills the mind to the exclusion of exegetical processes; and what is recalled is misleading. This

fact is especially true of musical appreciation, since the impact of sound on the nerves is more immediately poignant than that of diffused light; and it is only when we come to reflect upon the quality of this impact that we can realize the *order* of art to which music belongs. This order is the rhetorical, and something inheres in this statement other than the sense in which all art partakes of rhetoric in its attempt to persuade the mind through the senses. That something is the emergence of music from its original association with the voice, which used its various registers to reinforce the effect of words. The accented words would tend to be pushed out into either the top or the bottom of the whole range of utterable sounds, while the other words would move about round the centre according to their relative importance in the context of the sentence. In this way the status of the vocables composing a sentence, rhetorically delivered, will gradually have approached nearer and nearer to that of musical sounds; so that the final result could be considered as a rudimentary melody. It is when this stage is reached that music detaches itself from words as an independent form of rhetoric, while retaining the basic pretensions of that order. But it is the moment of severance that counts; at this moment—when the irregular harmonics of mere sound become focused into the orderly harmonics of music—an imponderable makes its appearance. In the dark sky of the brain the graph of stars begins to prick, and we are persuaded of a truth.

The rhetoric of music is one of images, never of ideas; the world of music is purely a world of emotion. But emotion in art is a specimen of eternity and so is as different from emotion in life as a phrase sung is different from a phrase spoken. It follows, then, that we should expect, and find, in music emotional images and combinations which simply do not occur at all outside the art. As Bergson has it: 'They (the emotions we discover in music) have not been drawn from life by art; rather is it we who, in order to describe them in words, are obliged to translate the feelings created by the artist by those which, in life, resemble them most nearly'.

This is not a paradox, as a comparison with other arts will show. The idealized figures of Renaissance painting, the abstractions of Picasso and Paul Klee and Henry Moore, the juxtapositions of surrealism, the distortions of Graham Sutherland, evoke emotional responses as unique as those evoked by music and at some removes

from any feeling that would be appropriate to the natural objects upon which they are comments. And even in poetry, which deals in the very stuff of verbal communication, there are esoteric instances—Milton, Mallarmé, Nerval, Coleridge (*Kubla Khan*), Valéry, Gerard Manley Hopkins—which create new aggregates of feeling unsusceptible of a final analysis. If it were merely a case of finding a set of symbols to express the artistic experience of a ‘thing’, then the two halves of the resulting image would remain for ever separate and thoroughly describable. But this is not what happens. The creative process involves the initial destruction, within ourselves, of the object, which is thereupon rebuilt according to the (essentially mysterious) laws of the medium chosen. The landscape is dissolved into pigment, the story into a pattern of words, the sequence of emotions into musical language; and dissolution implies chemical change.

The final result, then—the work of art—possesses an independent kind of truth, of which the beholder is persuaded (i.e. by the rhetoric of artistic method). This truth is rooted in the essential unity of all *percepta*. The stuff of Nature is homogeneous, at least as far as the human senses go. To take a very simple example: the surface of anything, when subjected to various kinds of pressure, tends to behave in the same way; thus materials as apparently diverse as water, smoke, metal, skin and smooth bark, can all be crinkled in a manner that in each case reminds us of the others. This ability to perceive unity in diversity is one of the chief sources of beauty, and to be constantly aware of it is constantly to increase the vocabulary of art.

Such considerations may seem remote from music. But in fact the transformation of Nature into harmonious and schematic sound is different only in degree from that practised by other arts. Music is, inescapably, a description of Man in Nature, and it is part of the business of criticism to establish the connection and interpret the language used. The mathematical basis of music is technical only; taken as a plea for regarding finished compositions as ‘pure’, in the sense of being ‘unconnected with other systems of sensuous imagery’, the term is abusive. The difficulty of musical criticism lies in an adequate appreciation of the extent to which a composer has succeeded in integrating vision and idiom. Technical criticism is the beginning, not the end, of a much wider subject.

(*To be concluded*)

## DENYS PARSONS

# TESTIMONY AND TRUTH

'When the mind is once pleased with certain things, it draws all others to consent, and to go along with them; and though the power and number of instances that make for the contrary are greater, yet it either attends not to them, or despises them, or else removes them by a distinction, with a strong and pernicious prejudice to maintain the authority of the first choice unviolated. And hence in most cases of superstition, as of Astrology, Dreams, Omens, Judgements, etc., those who find pleasure in such kind of vanities *always observe where the event answers, but slight and pass by the instances where it fails, which are the much more numerous.* — FRANCIS BACON: *Novum Organum*. I. xlvi.'

THE recent trial at the Old Bailey of the materializing medium Helen Duncan, and three others, and their conviction of offences under the Witchcraft Act of 1735, raises again the question of the reliability of human testimony generally, and in particular of the testimony of sitters at a dark-room spiritualist séance. The jury of six men and one woman heard contradictory evidence given sincerely and convincingly by intelligent witnesses on both sides.<sup>1</sup>

In the whole history of Spiritualism and Psychical Research there have been few more hotly debated cases than that of the mediumship of Helen Duncan. A great number of people believe implicitly in the genuineness of her phenomena; their belief persisted after her previous conviction at Edinburgh in 1933, and is unlikely to be shaken by the verdict of the jury at the Old Bailey.

Mrs. Duncan is what is known as a 'materializing' or 'physical' medium because she claims to be able to materialize in the 'ectoplasm' produced by her own body, the spirits of departed relatives, friends, and even animals of the sitters. She has been described as a common fraud, and indeed fraud undeniably forms part of her make-up, but *common* fraud she certainly is not, because her amazing phenomena have never been satisfactorily explained.

Harry Price, who has exposed many a fraudulent medium, conducted a series of sittings with Mrs. Duncan in 1931. The

<sup>1</sup> An appeal has been lodged and the case is likely to remain *sub judice* at the time of going to press. Comment on the trial must therefore be restricted.

precautions taken against fraud were elaborate, and included a thorough medical examination of the medium immediately before the sitting, after which she was sewn up in a special one-piece black séance-suit and escorted to her place in the 'cabinet'. In spite of this, ectoplasm and spirit heads duly made their appearance, and Price developed his 'Regurgitation Theory'. He is convinced that all the phenomena can be explained on the assumption that the medium swallows cheese-cloth and other materials before the séance and subsequently regurgitates them in the dark seclusion of the cabinet. He points out that regurgitation has long been known to medical science; the frog-swallowers of country fairs are said to make use of a secondary stomach or oesophageal diverticulum. (H. Price: *Regurgitation and the Duncan Mediumship*.)

When Price had reached this conclusion he offered Mrs. Duncan a large cash sum and his cachet of genuineness if she would give a séance after a stomach examination under anaesthetic. She appeared to agree, but before the séance was due to take place she fled to Scotland. At about the same time the London Spiritualist Alliance, part of whose policy is an acknowledged belief in Survival, issued an unfavourable report on the medium in which they also concluded that regurgitation was the explanation. (*Light*, 17 July 1931 and May 1944.)

Inspection of the photographs<sup>1</sup> taken at Duncan sittings certainly gives one an overwhelming impression that the ectoplasm and spirits are of mundane and not of spiritual origin. What appear to be the warp, weft, and selvedge of butter-muslin can be clearly identified, as can rents and folds in the material, and in other photographs we can pick out unmistakably a rubber glove, a safety-pin, and dolls' heads or masks. On four or five occasions the investigators were allowed to cut off small pieces of 'ectoplasm'. Analysis showed these to be identical with paper or cotton gauze mixed sometimes with albumen or resin.

Nevertheless the regurgitation theory is not entirely satisfactory; if we accept it we must believe that Mrs. Duncan can swallow before the séance six or seven feet of 30-inch width butter-muslin or cheese-cloth, a rubber glove, portraits cut from

<sup>1</sup> The photographs accompanying this article are reproduced by kind permission of Mr. Harry Price. They appear in his book *Leaves from a Psychist's Case-book*.

magazines, pins, etc., regurgitating them during the séance and swallowing them once more without trace. Moreover, Mrs. Duncan has since been X-rayed (though not at the time of a séance) and found to have a completely normal stomach and oesophagus. Witnesses have testified that they have seen her consume large meals before séances. Unfortunately it was not stated that a medical examination was made in these cases; in the absence of a medical examination it is not impossible that 'ectoplasm' had been concealed elsewhere. (According to Price, fraudulent mediums have been known to conceal 'ectoplasm' and small 'apports' in the mouth, nostrils, rectum, vagina, under the arms, in the hair, etc.)

The most interesting aspect of trials under the Witchcraft and Vagrancy Acts is the testimony of witnesses for the defence. After prosecution witnesses have declared that in the dim light only the vague outlines of a white material could be seen, twenty-five or thirty defence witnesses testify that they identified their husbands, wives, or mothers, beyond all possibility of doubt. The points of recognition include mannerisms of speech and movement, foreign dialects, and distinguishing marks such as moles on the face. Now the witnesses on both sides are ordinary intelligent people, many of them holding responsible positions, but both sides cannot be right.

A study of the literature makes one incline to Bacon's view that the 'will to believe' is a powerful factor in our judgements of supernormal events. Thus D. D. Home, a physical medium of repute, in his book *Lights and Shadows of Spiritualism*, 1878 (p. 342), quotes part of the confession of an exposed physical medium: 'At the first séance I held after it became known to the Rochester people that I was a medium, a gentleman from Chicago recognized his daughter Lizzie in me after I had covered my small moustache with a piece of flesh-coloured cloth, and reduced the size of my face with a shawl I had hung up in the back of the cabinet. From this sitting my fame commenced to spread.' In *Revelations of a Spirit Medium* (anonymous), a book which has the ring of truth in every line, another American medium tells how he purchased a toy wire-gauze mask which he held out at sittings, in front of a luminous handkerchief: 'That wire mask has been recognized by dozens of persons as fathers, mothers, sisters, brothers and cousins, sweethearts, wives, husbands, and

various other relatives and friends.' Elsewhere in the book he says: 'After all it is not always the excellence of the work so much as the ignorance of the observer that makes many things appear wonderful. . . . The writer was himself under the eye and in the pay of a gentleman investigator for three years, not only not being detected in any tricks but making a firm Spiritualist of him.'

The valuable work of the Society for Psychical Research during the past sixty years includes investigations into the reliability of human testimony. An important investigation was conducted in 1887 by Richard Hodgson in collaboration with S. J. Davey, an amateur conjuror. At the time 'psychography' or psychic slate-writing was much in fashion due to the activities of the well-known—but undoubtedly fraudulent—mediums, Slade and Eglinton. A large number of sittings was held and the investigators collected from many intelligent people, including professional conjurers, testimonials to Davey's 'wonderful supernormal powers'. When Davey subsequently announced that all his effects were produced by trickery, the Spiritualists were, perhaps justifiably, annoyed, but one or two indeed would not accept Davey's explanation, maintaining that at their own sittings with him real psychography *was* manifested; and challenged him in effect to prove that he was *not* a medium!

More recently (1931) the Society for Psychical Research undertook an elaborate experiment designed by Theodore Besterman with the express purpose of examining the sort of evidence obtained at sittings with a physical medium. A dummy séance was held, to resemble as closely as possible a real spiritualist séance. A lady member of the Society took the part of the medium and sat in front of the curtained 'cabinet' with the usual variety of musical instruments—trumpet, xylophone, tambourine, zither, and bell—on a table in front of her. Other members acted as sitters. Besterman made it clear that the séance was not a real one, and asked everybody to pay particular attention. During the séance he dimmed and brightened the lights, started and stopped the gramophone twice, made a flash-light exposure, and so on. On one occasion, at a pre-arranged knock on the door, he left the room and returned immediately, putting a white card in his pocket. At the end of the sitting, which lasted 25 minutes, the sitters adjourned to the next room

to answer a questionnaire. The results were most instructive.

Forty-two sitters took part in the experiment, six identical sittings being held with seven persons present at each. Question 3 was: 'Early in the sitting there was a disturbance. Describe what happened.' Of the 42 sitters, 11 failed to give any account of the knock-on-the-door incident; of the remaining 31 sitters who mentioned the knock, 13 did not report the opening of the door and only four reported the important fact that Besterman put something in his pocket on returning. During the sitting the 'medium' moved a small hand-bell in good light from one end of the table to the other. The question, 'What object did the medium move?' produced correct replies from only 18 of the 42 sitters. Even more striking was the fact that 13 sitters experienced illusions of one kind or another. Thus two sitters reported the bell as a glass of water! Another sitter referred to a candle on the table though there was none there. Others experienced illusions of movement: 'Immediately after the flashlight photograph four objects jerked up and down in a zig-zag pattern'. Three sitters, one of them a psychologist, reported movements of the table which did not in fact take place.

It must be emphasized that these marked defects of observation and memory, and the illusions, took place on occasions when there was no suggestive atmosphere, no emotional stress, and when every sitter was on the *qui vive* in anticipation of the questionnaire. How much reliance, then, are we to place on the statements of emotionally tense persons sitting in dim light, in an atmosphere of religious fervour, and actuated by the powerful desire to get in touch with their departed relatives?

The experiments of Claparède at Geneva University in 1906 are relevant to the Duncan case. Claparède arranged for a masked figure to enter his lecture-room unexpectedly, create a disturbance, and retire after 20 seconds. A week later 23 students were asked to pick out the mask used from ten others of different types. *Only five of the 23 answered correctly:* four others choosing the correct mask jointly with another one, unable to make a final decision. Six of the masks, only one of which was even remotely like the one worn by the figure, were wrongly chosen by one or more students. Indeed, it is unnecessary to have recourse to the supernormal for cases of mistaken identity. Police officers and magistrates are very familiar with them, and

interesting cases appear from time to time in the daily Press.

As an example of the lengths to which any one of us may be led by the will to believe, we have the famous story of the adventure at Versailles. (*An Adventure*, by C. A. E. Moberly and E. F. Jourdain, 1911.) Two distinguished scholars, ladies of more than average intelligence, spent an afternoon together at Versailles wandering round the gardens of the Petit Trianon. They saw nothing strange enough to occasion any surprise or excite comment; in fact they neither discussed nor thought about their visit until *a whole week later*, when Miss Moberly said to Miss Jourdain: 'Do you think that the Petit Trianon is haunted?' She replied: 'Yes, I do,' and the ladies now exchanged their recollections of the visit, as a result of which they became convinced that they had been transported back in time from 1901 and had seen the buildings, gardens and people as they were in 1789. They had met liveried flunkies, seen a curious plough, and had stumbled upon Marie Antoinette herself sketching in the gardens. *Three months later* they first set down on paper their recollections of the 'adventure', and for the next ten years they spent the best part of their spare time examining old documents in the archives of the Palace and in consulting various authorities. They built up a mass of evidence to support their supernormal explanation—it seems never to have occurred to them to try to find a *normal* explanation. Those who have read the book will argue that the predictions made by the authors and verified by subsequent research afford conclusive proof of a psychic event. They should read *The Mystery of Versailles*, by J. R. Sturge-Whiting (1938), who points out a number of discrepancies in the original story and gives a normal explanation of the whole affair. These readers will then have a balanced picture of what happened at Versailles on that afternoon in August 1901.

A balanced picture—yes, that is the best we can hope to achieve, for Sturge-Whiting's book provides no *proof* that the events did not occur exactly as the two ladies relate. Any sceptic who would dismiss *a priori* the possibility of apparitions should first examine the enormous weight of evidence collected and sifted by the S.P.R. from cases of apparitions in normal healthy people. Compared with the Versailles case the evidence for some of these apparitions is of a much higher quality. (See *Apparitions and Haunted Houses*, by Sir Ernest Bennett, M.P., 1939; *Phantasms of the*

*Living*, by Gurney, Myers and Podmore, 1886; and *Apparitions*, by G. N. M. Tyrrell, 1942.) All these apparitions were subjective hallucinations of no physical substance, and could not be photographed. On several occasions cameras have been exposed with an apparition in full view, but nothing appeared on the plate. It is not very difficult to believe that hallucinations can and do occur at séances to sitters and medium under conditions so favourable for their production, but it is difficult to believe in spirit forms which can affect a photographic plate. (The evidence for spirit photography is voluminous but most unconvincing; the evidence against is formidable.)

The Spiritualists are as eager as the Psychical Researchers to settle once and for all the question of physical mediumship, and fortunately we shall not have to rely much longer on human testimony. After the war the technique of the infra-red cine-camera will become standard in all Psychical Research laboratories, thus doing away with the necessity for the unsatisfactory tactful control of the medium. Alternatively, if the medium complains (as Mrs. Duncan does) that the infra-red burns, she may be controlled indirectly by a network of 'electric eyes' (photo-electric cells) on the burglar-alarm principle. Other instruments will register 'psychic breezes' and changes of temperature if any.

It is time for *genuine* mediums to realize that they need some measure of protection against falling foul of the law, and that such protection is afforded by sittings *under test conditions with an independent scientific body*. Rudi Schneider, one of the best-known physical mediums, was tested by the Society for Psychical Research by Dr. Osty of the Institut Metapsychique in Paris, and by Harry Price of the National Laboratory for Psychical Research. The writer is convinced that charges of false pretences would have failed in face of expert testimony (backed by instrumental records) to his genuineness. Another medium well known forty years ago, Eusapia Palladino, was similarly tested by various authorities and pronounced genuine.

Now the surprise—Palladino was many times caught cheating by the investigators; she would cheat in the most naïve and ridiculous way, and admitted herself that she would 'help out' the phenomena if she could get a hand free. In some of the later Schneider sittings the control was unsatisfactory and the medium may have cheated. Yet these two mediums convinced the

arch-sceptics of many countries that they produced phenomena inexplicable by known laws. This paradox, that a medium caught red-handed in fraud may yet be capable of genuine phenomena, is only one of the difficulties encountered with physical mediums, and it emphasizes the need for the most elaborate control.

The early papers of Sir William Crookes, F.R.S. (then Mr. Crookes), on his investigations of the physical phenomena of D. D. Home are well worth reading. (*Researches in the Phenomena of Spiritualism*, 1874.) Robert Browning ridiculed Home in 'Mr. Sludge, the medium', a poem of great length which begins:

'Now don't, sir! Don't expose me! Just this once!  
This was the first and only time, I'll swear—  
Look at me—see, I kneel, the only time,  
I swear, I ever cheated—yes, by the soul  
Of her who hears (your sainted mother, sir!)  
All, except this last accident, was truth.'

Curiously enough, D. D. Home was one of the few physical mediums who have never been exposed.

Many Spiritualists complain that Psychical Research Societies will go to any lengths to expose mediums. This is not so; the psychical investigator is only anxious to find out the truth, and he is as pleased as anybody when positive results are obtained. He is nevertheless compelled by his fear of recording *spurious* positive results to adopt a higher standard of criticism, and moreover he is as critical of his own work as of that of others. Some who have sat with Mrs. Duncan say, 'My dear man! When one has seen the phenomena with one's own eyes it is futile to talk of test conditions and stomach examinations.' But having heard what Hodgson and Besterman have to say, can we really trust the evidence of our own eyes on these matters?

The onus is on the Spiritualists<sup>1</sup> to explain why materializations which they believe to be genuine, when photographed, bear every indication of fraudulent origin. Why is the ectoplasm indistinguishable from cheese-cloth? Why does the spirit hand look *exactly* like a rubber glove? Why does the stereoscopic camera show the spirit head to be a two-dimensional cut-out portrait? Why does analysis of the ectoplasm reveal that it

<sup>1</sup> By no means all Spiritualists support Mrs. Duncan, and of course Spiritualism does not stand or fall by physical mediumship.

consists of cotton or paper fibres mixed with albumen? These problems are not peculiar to Mrs. Duncan, but arise in nearly every case in which ectoplasm has been photographed. It is well worth spending half an hour examining the photographs in Baron von Schrenck-Notzing's massive book, *The Phenomena of Materialization*.

Mrs. Duncan offered to let her powers be tested in court, but the offer was declined. Let us hope that she will one day offer herself again for investigation to one of the research institutions; in the meantime her mediumship must be regarded as 'not proven'.

#### PSYCHICAL RESEARCH

*Science and Psychical Phenomena*, by G. N. M. Tyrrell (1938: abridgement shortly to appear in Pelican edition). The best book on the subject.

- *Fifty Years of Psychical Research*, by Harry Price (1939).

*Human Personality and its Survival of Bodily Death*, by F. W. H. Myers (1903, 1917).

*How to go to a Medium*, by E. J. Dingwall (1927).

#### PHYSICAL PHENOMENA AND MATERIALIZATION

*Regurgitation and the Duncan Mediumship*. Bulletin No. 1 of the National Laboratory for Psychical Research (1931).

*Materialisationsphänomene*, by A. von Schrenck-Notzing (1923), and English translation (1923).

*The Physical Phenomena of Spiritualism*, by Hereward Carrington (1920).

*Researches in the Phenomena of Spiritualism*, by Wm. Crookes (1874).

*Rudi Schneider*, by Harry Price (1930).

#### THE PSYCHOLOGY OF TESTIMONY

*La Critique du Témoignage* (1927), by François Gorphe, who gives 600 literature references.

*The Principles of Judicial Proof*, by John Wigmore (2nd edition, Boston, 1931).

*Proceedings of the Society for Psychical Research*, Vol. IV, pp. 45-74, 338-495; Vol. VIII, pp. 253-310; Vol. XL, pp. 365 ff., 'Besterman's Fake Séance'.

#### DECEPTIVE METHODS

H. Carrington: *op. cit.* H. Price; *Fifty Years . . .*

*Revelations of a Spirit Medium* (anonymous, 1891: facsimile edition edited by Price and Dingwall, 1922).

Few of the above books are available in public libraries, but they may be obtained from the libraries of the Society for Psychical Research, 31 Tavistock Square, W.C.1, and of the London Spiritualist Alliance, 16 Queensberry Place, S.W.7.

ENID STARKIE

# ECCENTRICS OF EIGHTEEN-THIRTY

## II. LES BOUZINGOS

(a) PÉTRUS BOREL

THE literature of the period of unrest during the early years of the reign of Louis Philippe was a literature of extravagance, morbidity and indecency. Novels and stories abound in accounts of rape, incest, orgies and scandals. Typical of this literature is that of the *Bouzingo* movement, also called the *Jeunes France*. Théophile Gautier has related their eccentricities in a book of sketches called *Les Jeunes France*.

The chief *Bouzingos* were Gautier himself, Gerard de Nerval, Pétrus Borel, Philothée O'Neddy and some artists. At the time it was Pétrus Borel who was considered the most important and Gautier only reached fame after the end of the movement, when the star of the other poet had set.

The *Bouzingos* were the chief fighters in the *Bataille d'Hernani*, those who were responsible for the victory and, during the last years of the Restoration, were considered the brightest hopes of literature. The fame of Pétrus Borel in particular was very great, although he had not yet published anything. It used to be said in literary circles that when he began to print his poems, Victor Hugo would need to look to his laurels. In 1829 he was the unchallenged leader of the younger generation of writers and it was to him that Hugo turned—not to Gautier or to Gerard de Nerval—to organize the campaign for the *Bataille d'Hernani*.

Pétrus Borel, says Gautier in his *Histoire du Romantisme*, was the living incarnation of the spirit of poetry and not an ordinary mortal. At this time he looked as if he had stepped down from a picture by Velasquez and it would have been easy to imagine him slinking mysteriously through the streets of Seville in his cloak *couleur de muraille*. He had a haughty, condescending courtesy which made him different from his contemporaries for, although he was a rebel, he was not a rough Bohemian. It

was this aristocratic and disdainful quality which was to attract Baudelaire when he met him fifteen years later. The bitterness and irony of his speech were very similar to those of Baudelaire when young, and his paradoxes were listened to with the same open-mouthed amazement by the general public. The reputation he enjoyed of indulging in passionate and exotic love affairs, further enhanced his notoriety and glamour.

Sometimes he wore a red waistcoat—the colour of Polish blood, he used to say—and a wide-brimmed hat with a bunch of multi-coloured ribbons flowing down behind. But he generally dressed in the severe well-cut black suit—tight-fitting trousers and a coat buttoned up to the neck showing only a narrow rim of white above a black silk stock—which he is wearing in the famous portrait by Boulanger. He owned a beautiful spaniel, to whom he was more devoted than to any of his friends, and this dog is also seen in the portrait.

His face was serious in expression, far older than his years, of perfect regularity of feature. His skin was of a light olive colour, faintly golden, like the patina on an old painting; his eyes were bright but at the same time weighted with melancholy—the eyes of a vulture. His mouth was a brilliant red—like an exotic flower, Gautier describes it—beneath his moustache, and it possessed the mobility of the mouth of an oriental. But most remarkable of all was his dark brown beard, a silky beard, faintly perfumed, that framed his face and gave him the appearance of a Sultan from the *Arabian Nights*. At that time, says Gautier, there were only two beards in the whole of Paris, that of Déveria and that of Borel, but Borel's was the finer, a full beard, an imperial beard, the beard of a leader.

Borel used to affect in his speech a strange and paradoxical manner—a manner later adopted by Baudelaire—and no one knew whether he meant seriously the outrageous things he used to say. Like Baudelaire he was a brilliant conversationalist and in 1829 he used still to enjoy society; he had not yet begun his lycanthropic baying at the moon. He could, when he was twenty, have posed for the perfect Byronic hero, *l'homme fatal*, proud of his good looks, arrogant in his behaviour, striding along surrounded by a bevy of admiring youths, with his cloak thrown over his shoulder, 'trailing his shadow' behind him, and woe betide the man who dared to step on it.

As a boy the only talent that Pétrus Borel seemed to possess was for drawing, therefore his father took him away from school and apprenticed him to a well-known architect called Garnaud. But Garnaud had not progressed beyond the classical style and all the young artists at the time were carried away by enthusiasm for the Gothic. Borel, nourished on the novels of Scott, dreamed only of medieval castles and he left Garnaud to finish his studies with a more modern master. After five years' apprenticeship he opened his own office. He was then only twenty. At first he had no commissions and he lived in poverty, with no shelter except that given to him by a friend, a fellow architect. Eventually he secured some contracts and he is said to have drawn the plans for the circus on the *Boulevard du Temple*. He is also alleged to have undertaken a series of houses for a building society. These did not, however, give satisfaction, for his employers expressed doubt as to the soundness of the foundations since Borel would follow no plans, not even his own. At the building of the fourth house, when objections were still being raised, he pulled down what he had already built and tore up his contract.

It was then, in 1829, that he made the acquaintance of the artists Eugène and Achille Déveria. This event altered the course of his life and made him turn from architecture to poetry. For several years he had been much interested in new developments in literature. Friendship with the Déveria brothers gave him belief in himself, confidence in his poetic gifts. With them he met many of the most interesting young writers of his own age. He was twenty and he had been living an adult life since the age of fifteen, a professional life, and he felt himself far older and more experienced than the youths of his age. He took the lead amongst the ten or twelve artists and writers, none of whom was more than twenty, and made of them a force to fight against classicism. He called them *Le Petit Cénacle*—to distinguish them from the older *Cénacle* which had been meeting since 1824 under the leadership of Nodier—and they used to gather in the studio of the sculptor Jehan du Seigneur. They all prided themselves on their eccentricities and extravagance and, to make themselves different from other people, they altered their names to give them a foreign, archaic or aristocratic sound. Thus Gerald Labrunie became Gerard de Nerval, Jean became Jehan, Louis turned into Aloysius and Pierre into Pétrus. Sometimes the

vogue of Scott was apparent in the alteration. Auguste Maquet transformed his name into Augustus MacKeat and Théophile Dondey changed his name, by anagram, to Philothée O'Neddy.

Their fashion in dress was as eccentric as their fashion in names. Gautier, in his *Histoire du Romantisme*, has left us a description of most of the members of *Le Petit Cénacle*. There was Jehan du Seigneur, who brushed his hair up from two side partings into a high peak rising up above his high forehead, to simulate—says Gautier—the flames of genius. In place of a waistcoat he wore a black velvet doublet fitting tightly to his figure and laced up the back; over this a loose jacket with wide velvet revers and a flowing silk tie. He showed no trace of white, not even a collar.

There was Eugène Déveria, famous even as early as this for his picture *La Naissance d'Henri IV*, a magnificent figure dressed like a Spanish grandee. There was Ourloff in his Cossack boots; Bouchardy in his bright blue coat with the gilt buttons like that worn by a maharajah; the two brothers, one nicknamed Le Gothic and the other Le Christ, in their sweeping light-blue cloaks lined with pale pink and fastened by big pearl buttons as large as five-shilling pieces. There was Célestin Nanteuil, who was said to look like an archangel who had stepped down from a medieval stained-glass window. It is he who has illustrated many of the exquisite editions of romantic poets which are now the prize of connoisseurs. Then there were, best known to posterity, Gerard de Nerval and Théophile Gautier. The former had already received recognition for his translation of *Faust*, which had found favour with Goethe himself. Gautier, at nineteen, was famous for nothing save his exuberant spirits and his flowing locks. The following year, at the *Bataille d'Hernani*, he was to reach notoriety on account of his red velvet doublet and his pale green trousers with the black velvet stripe running down the seams.

Hugo, who would have nothing to learn from the twentieth century in matters of publicity, was determined that his reception at the *Comédie Française* should outshine those of Dumas and Vigny who had preceded him. The rumour went abroad that he was planning a daring 'coup' for his first night, though no one knew exactly what it was, but members of *Le Petit Cénacle* were seen slinking into his house late at night, looking—like Hernani—as if they were chargés d'un mandat d'anathème. Pétrus

Borel, who was entrusted with the organization of the *Bataille d'Hernani*, had collected under his orders a band of about a hundred students from the *Latin Quarter* whom he carefully coached in the passages where they should cheer, and silence, with physical force if necessary, any opposition. To make the conspiracy more mysterious, instead of being issued with ordinary tickets, his followers were given cards on which was printed in blood red *Hierro*, the Spanish word for 'iron'.

To make certain of occupying positions of advantage, Hugo's followers went early to the theatre on the evening of the first performance and they had several hours to wait before the play began. To while away the hours of waiting they had brought food with them—highly flavoured sausages—and the theatre reeked of garlic and onion by the time the more aristocratic members of the audience arrived. They, largely supporters of the Classic faction, talked loudly of the desecration of the Temple of Melpomone by the barbarians.

At the very first couplet with the daring *enjambement* the uproar began. Thereafter it became impossible to hear a single line with the ensuing booing and cheering. There were outraged protests when the King asked—just like an ordinary mortal—‘Est-il minuit?’ to which the plebeian answer came, ‘Minuit bientôt.’ The rules of literary decorum and dignity would have demanded an elegant periphrasis like ‘l’heure attiendra bientôt sa dernière demeure’. An unexpected diversion occurred when Don Carlos says to Ruy Gomez: ‘Vieillard stupide il l'aime’. Then Monsieur de Grandmaison, an ardent supporter of the Classics but also somewhat deaf, thought he had heard ‘Vieil as de pique! (old ace of spades!)’ He imagined that here was one of the daring metaphors of which the rebels were so proud and he cried out with indignation, ‘Ma foi, that is going too far!’ ‘What is going too far?’ asked Lassailly, provocatively, the youngest and most fervent of the Romantics, ‘What is going too far?’ Monsieur de Grandmaison answered, ‘Nothing will ever make me believe that it is not going too far to call a respectable old man like Ruy Gomez “old ace of spades.”’ Lassailly insisted that this was one of the finest and most original metaphors in the whole play and that, moreover, the author had a perfect right to use it, since cards had been invented at the time of Hernani. ‘Les cartes étaient inventées, Monsieur l’Académicien, si vous

ne savez pas cela je vous l'apprends. Bravo pour le vieil as de pique!"

The battle was fought with great bitterness, line by line, until the end, but it was youth which finally won the day and thenceforth victory for Romanticism was complete.

Later in the same year literary revolution was followed by political revolution.

In 1830 Borel was an ardent republican and he welcomed the revolution. He was ready to rush out to sacrifice his life at the barricades, but his father locked him in the house and did not allow him out until the disturbances were over. He was, as were all his friends, disgusted with the results of the revolution, and when everything was over he turned violently against all accepted standards in art, morality and conventions. To protest against the social order he gathered his followers together and went to live the simple life, as preached by Saint-Simon, in an empty house on the outskirts of Paris. But his interpretation of the simple life seemed to consist in practices calculated to disturb and annoy the respectable neighbours. He and his friends used to sit naked in their garden—the wearing of clothes being considered too conventional—until the nearby householders complained to the police that they could see them from their windows and that this conduct was *une offense à la pudeur*. A further source of irritation was the music practised, concerted music for brass wind instruments in which none of them was proficient.

They called themselves first *les Tartares* and later *les Bouzingos*. This last name had been hurled at them in abuse, but they picked it up as a compliment and adopted it with pride. One evening they were running wildly through the streets shrieking 'Vive Bouchardy! Vive Bouchardy!' Bouchardy was an artist member of their circle. This was shortly after the revolution of 1830 and the police, thinking they were shouting 'Vive Charles Dix!' arrested them. In the police court proceedings they were referred to as *bouzingos*, the noisy fellows, from the word *bouzin*, meaning noise.

Shortly afterwards Borel moved to a house in a street most aptly called 'La Rue d'Enfer' and there he gave one of the famous 'orgies' of the eighteen-thirties. 'Orgies' were a characteristic feature of social life at the time and most novels contain an account of an orgy. Typical is that described by Balzac in *Peau*

*de Chagrin.* At Borel's party the ices were served in skulls and the punch was so strong that many of the guests were temporarily disabled and taken down unconscious to the basement until they had revived. The fashionable 'galop infernal' was danced and brought the festivities to a close. As the dance room was too small, the rout finished up in the streets outside in the early hours of the morning, with the dancers in fancy dress and most of them intoxicated.

Borel's first work, a book of poems, appeared in 1832 under the title *Les Rhapsodies*. In the violent preface—the most daring feature of the collection—he sets forth his aims. He is determined to seek no patron or favours, to follow and imitate no one. He is going to try a new method of composition, to purge his system, purify his blood, and he does not care if his readers enjoy what he has written. 'Il faut qu'un enfant jette sa bave avant de parler franc; il faut que la poésie jette la sienne. J'ai jeté la mienne, la voici! Il faut que le métal bouillonnant dans le creuset rejette sa scorie; la poésie bouillonnant dans ma poitrine a rejeté la sienne; la voici! Donc ces *Rhapsodies* sont de la bave et de la scorie!' He ends by openly proclaiming his lycanthropy, his philosophy of the were-wolf, his anarchy and his determination to turn his back on all accepted bourgeois standards and virtues.

The most typical characteristics of Borel are contained in this preface and he altered very little thereafter. Here are seen his well known arrogance and violence. But, what is also characteristic of him, he promises far more than he performs. When the poems which follow the violent preface are examined they prove disappointing. It is not that they are particularly weak. Indeed they are good of their kind, superior to those composed by Victor Hugo at the same age. But they are not what he promised and they are far from being the 'scum and the slag' of his nature. Most of the poems are very similar to those printed in the little romantic 'keepsakes' of the day. His feelings may have been undisciplined, but he did not succeed in conveying the violence to his readers. There are, nevertheless, certain poems which anticipate the 'spleen' vein of Baudelaire. Amongst these are *Heur et Malheur*, *Misère* and *Désespoir*. In this last poem, especially, there is some of the bitterness of Baudelaire's *Voyage à Cythère*. These three poems are a fine achievement for a young man of twenty-two.

Borel's next work, *Champavert, Contes Immoraux*, the highest peak of his literary career, was published the following year. Immoral is scarcely the correct epithet to apply to these tales, since bitterness and horror are more apparent than immorality. In the preface Borel pretends that the previous work, *Les Rhapsodies*, had been published under the pseudonym *Pétrus Borel*, but that they were in reality the work of a poet called Champavert who had since committed suicide and that these *Contes Immoraux* are his posthumous work, his literary testament. The preface, purporting to tell the life of Champavert, gives a faithful account of Borel's own life and it is from this preface that we obtain most of the details concerning his early youth. The preface opens with a sentence very characteristic of Borel. 'Pétrus Borel s'est tué ce printemps. Prions Dieu pour lui afin que son âme à laquelle il ne croyait pas trouve merci devant Dieu qu'il niait.' He quotes some of the aphorisms of the dead poet which are very similar to those of Baudelaire in *Fusées*. 'Dans Paris il y a deux cavernes, l'une de voleurs et l'autre de meurtriers; celle de voleurs c'est la Bourse, celle de meurtriers c'est le Palais de Justice' . . . And again 'Aussi je répugne à donner de poignées de main à d'autres qu'à des intimes; je frissonne involontairement à cette idée qui ne manque jamais de m'assailir, que je presse peut-être une main infidèle, traîtresse, parricide.'

Each of the tales is one of horror, murder, vice or violence. In one of them the heroine, after being betrayed by the man she loves and unjustly allowed by him to be condemned for the murder of her infant child, sings, on the eve of her execution, a song reminiscent of *Les Litanies de Satan* of Baudelaire.

Haine à toi Dieu, monde, nature,  
 Haine à tout ce que je rêvais.  
 Mon âme expire et je la voue  
 A Satan pour l'éternité.

No character in any of the tales expresses a generous or kindly emotion or performs a disinterested action. Nothing is normal. The psychology of each person is falsified and twisted in order to produce the atmosphere of horror. *Andréas Vesalis* is perhaps the most successful, for it is the one in which horror is most skilfully blended with the plot so as to form an integral part of it, where it does not distort the characters. It is the story of an

aged professor of anatomy who marries a beautiful and frivolous young woman and then finds that, in spite of the violence of passion, he is impotent with her. He buries himself once more in his scientific researches and appears to accept with philosophic resignation that his wife should enjoy herself with idle handsome young men of her age, indeed he introduces them to her himself, and it would seem that it was with his connivance that they became her lovers. Each time, however, after a few weeks of happiness, the paramour mysteriously disappears and is never heard of again. This does not cause her distress as there seemed to be an unfailing supply of handsome youths and, in her eyes, one lover is as good as another provided he is young and good to look upon. At last, one day, Andréas Vesalis invites her to visit his laboratory and shows her, hanging in a cupboard, the skeletons of some of her former lovers in the clothes they had worn during their life, and the remains of others in various stages of decomposition and dissection in vessels round the room. He tells her that they have served him for his anatomical experiments and discoveries. He informs her then that the same fate will now be hers.

The tale ends with Andréas Vesalis bending over his wife's dead body on his work table and dissecting her with his scalpel.

The atmosphere of gloom in *Champavert*—what Borel calls ‘splenalgie’—is very similar to the ‘spleen’ of Baudelaire. In *Epilogue*, the *Testament de Champavert*, he pours out all his bitterness, the hatred and rancour of his nature against life. ‘Quand un arbre a été atteint de la foudre, nul printemps ne saurait le reverdir; il desséche sur pied, jusqu'à ce qu'un bûcheron le renverse de sa hache.’ One thinks here of Baudelaire’s poem, ‘Moi, mon âme est félée’. It is a woman who has brought him to this pass and he vituperates, with Baudelairian bitterness, against love. ‘L’amour pour moi c’est de la haine, des gémissements, des cris, de la honte, du deuil, du fer, des larmes, du sang, des cadavres, des ossements, des remords; je n’en ai pas connu d’autres.’ He was told that he might find solace and peace in nature, but for him, as for Baudelaire, nature was boring with the monotony of her colouring and her never-changing beauty. ‘Tous les ans des arbres verts. Qui nous délivrera des arbres verts? Pourquoi les feuilles ne prendraient-elles pas tour-à-tour les couleurs de l’arc en ciel? Que cette verdure est sotte!’

The *Testament* ends with a piece of blasphemy which recalls *Le Reniement de Saint-Pierre* of Baudelaire. 'Du reste vous autres chrétiens, vous avez pendu votre Dieu, et vous avez bien fait, car s'il était un Dieu, il serait pendable!'

*Champavert: Contes Immoraux* created a sensation when it appeared in 1833. It was hailed by some as a work of genius, by others as an obscene monstrosity. It was the highest and most notorious point in Borel's career. It did not, however, bring him wealth.

Pétrus Borel had by now spent his small capital, and life was very hard for him. He tried his hand at all forms of journalism to earn his living. He wrote sentimental stories and poems for women's papers and magazines. He sank deeper and deeper into poverty and despair. He gave up his fine clothes and he was eventually forced to destroy his spaniel, since he could no longer afford to feed it. For a time he even took up architecture again and Gautier recounts going to visit him and finding him camping in an unfinished house and living on boiled potatoes, 'with a little salt as a treat on Sundays' Borel said.

Then he left Paris, and lived in a wooden shack on a small plot of ground he owned in the country, in order to work in peace at the great work which would bring him fame and wealth. He lived as a hermit, in ragged clothes, on the vegetables which he grew on his allotment. He came near to starvation. Physical suffering is not the greatest evil of starvation, far worse are the melancholy and depression which it engenders. In hunger and solitude Borel's hatred of the world and of human nature increased and he became more eccentric. It was no longer the dashing eccentricity of a dandy, but the pathetic eccentricity of a Don Quixote. He even turned against his old friends, for he felt himself deserted and forgotten by everyone. Starvation and despair explain why he was so long in finishing his one novel, *Madame Putiphar*, and it shows signs of having been composed without interest or confidence. When it was finally published in 1839, the day was past when it might have enjoyed some success. The taste for horror had now vanished.

During the six years of composition Borel distilled all his bitterness and disillusionment to pour it into this one book and the resulting liquor is a coarse and fiery spirit like the product of an illicit still. The most horrible cruelties and pitiless

coincidences that the human mind could devise are to be found between the pages of this monstrous work and at no point does it achieve a purging of the emotions. It would be an impossible task to give a coherent summary of this distressing and fantastic book, for there is no plot to hold the attention during its six hundred odd pages. None of the characters behaves like a credible human being and none has any real interest for the reader who cares very little what their ultimate fate is. It is difficult to guess what was Borel's intention in writing this novel. The reader is regaled with the horrors of more than a quarter of a century in various prisons of France during the eighteenth century, but by repetition these become wearisome and in the end do not even horrify. Horror as a theme is suited only for brief sketches, and writers who have achieved success in this mood have always favoured the short story. Perhaps Borel wished to show up the abuses of the Bourbons—Madame Putiphar is intended for Madame de Pompadour and Pharaon for Louis Quinze. But she appears only on three occasions and dies in the early part of the novel and it would moreover be foolish to attribute to her all the wrongs which caused the Revolution. The whole book is written with the bitterness of a revolutionary pamphleteer, but by 1839 people were tired of hearing of the evils of the old régime and they were beginning to feel that the eighteenth century had been grossly maligned by historians. Pharaon and Madame Putiphar were figures from a melodrama which could only be of interest to a public under a revolution and thirsting for the blood of a tyrant. The work did not even achieve a 'succès de scandale' and not even Janin's article, in which he compared it to the writings of the Marquis de Sade, could awaken the interest of the public.

The most interesting feature for us today in *Madame Putiphar* is the verse prologue which has no real connection with the novel and one wonders why it figures there. This poem, written in the solitude and bitterness of exile from Paris, is a marked advance on any of *Les Rhapsodies* and it shows more maturity and depth of feeling. There is no necrophilic or satanic current here; it expresses a spiritual struggle between *spleen* and *idéal*, and it has a symbolism which is very like that of Baudelaire. Its chief fault is its excessive length and it would have been a greater poem if it had been more condensed. It is the account of the

struggle of three knights, the World, Solitude and Death, for the possession of the poet's soul. The poem shows more mastery in the art of writing, than any of Borel's previous poems, more inner vision and more moving symbolism. It alone would be sufficient to save *Madame Putiphar* from oblivion and to give Borel a permanent place in the history of French poetry. It is a poem which Baudelaire greatly admired.

Borel had built many hopes on the success of *Madame Putiphar* and he returned to Paris after it was published. But he was soon disappointed and he had once again to eke out a miserable existence on poorly paid journalist work. He founded a paper called *Le Satan*—the name is typical of him—which soon merged with another publication, *Le Corsaire*, becoming *Le Corsaire-Satan*, but it was eventually swallowed by its companion leaving no trace. It was in *Le Corsaire-Satan* that Baudelaire printed some of his first poems and it was at this time that he made the acquaintance of Borel. Borel was no longer the magnificent figure of 1830. His back was bowed, his eyes were deeply sunken in his head and he was beginning to grow bald. His general mood was one of the deepest gloom, sometimes he looked furtive and ashamed of himself. He appeared far older than his years. Even in those days Baudelaire felt great compassion and understanding for those who had failed; he saw in Borel someone who had been unable to compromise with the sordid conditions of modern life, and he was more attracted by this tragic wreck than he was by the more successful men of letters of his age. So it happened that, at the beginning of his artistic career, he was more influenced by the writings of Pétrus Borel than he was by his more famous contemporaries and he gave back new force to the macabre current of 1830.

By 1845 everything had failed Borel. Then he decided to abandon all hope of a literary career and to begin something else. The journalist Emile de Girardin obtained for him a civil service appointment as *Inspecteur de la Colonisation* in Algeria. There he started a new life which does not concern literature. He left France full of high hopes, but he seems to have been the most incompetent and inefficient civil servant imaginable. He married in Africa, bought a plot of land, meaning to found a family, and he built a Gothic castle which he called 'Le Castel de la Haute Pensée'. This medieval castle built of dark grey stone

must have struck an incongruous note amongst the white Algerian buildings.

Borel had never been well balanced nervously and, with bad reports from his superiors and constant complaints of his incompetence, his mind seems to have become deranged and he suffered from persecution mania. It did not occur to him that there might be legitimate grounds for remonstrance, and he always imagined that there was some deep plot to discredit him with the authorities in Paris. In the end he thought that he had discovered some malpractices in the dealings of his superiors—this may well have been true and the reports of the investigations are not wholly satisfactory—but a wiser man would not have burnt his fingers unless he had conclusive proof. If malpractices there were the perpetrators of them were too wise to leave any definite trace. As a result of the inquiry Borel was convicted of having libelled his superiors and he was dismissed from the service—the Government was probably glad to have an excuse to get rid of so inefficient a servant. Borel dragged out the remaining years of his life as a simple 'fellah', farming his own lands, living in grim poverty. He looked like a broken-down and mad Don Quixote, and he was only fifty when he died.

Shortly before he died the spring of poetry welled up in him again and he wrote his swan song, *Léthargie de la Muse*, which possesses some poetic quality. He tells in it how often he has tried to recall his Muse to life again, but that she has always remained deaf to his entreaties. Yet it was she who had once given him the only really happy days he had ever enjoyed, she had opened up for him new horizons; she had brought him great happiness but also great suffering. He tells her that he has never prostituted her beauty for vulgar gain, nor used her to advance his own ends, never made her sing the praises of others falsely. That at least he can say that he never wrote but what came sincerely from the depths of his heart.

Je suis fier d'avoir pu maintenir à distance  
 Des pacages d'autrui mon Pégase affamé,  
 Et d'avoir su toujours pourvoir à sa pittance,  
 Sans prendre nue grain qui n'ait dans mon âme germé.

Shortly afterwards he died. Some say he died of sunstroke,

from working in the heat of the sun without a hat. He used to say that if God intended his head to be covered he would not have allowed him to grow bald. Some allege that he allowed himself to die of hunger since there was nothing left in life worth living for. But this is the ending that romantic writers would like for the *lycanthrope*. They would like to think that, disgusted with everything, revolted by the injustice of the world, like Champavert, like Gerard de Nerval, he had died as a supreme protestation against life. Death of hunger, in exile, would have been an ending in keeping with his temperament and reputation.

In his early flaming youth Pétrus Borel had been a sketch of Baudelaire, a rough unfinished sketch of what Baudelaire was to bring to perfection. The fact that Baudelaire found qualities in him to praise, and inspiration and nourishment for his budding talent is sufficient to give the *lycanthrope* a permanent place in French literature.

#### (b) PHILOTHÉE O'NEDDY

It may have been on the personality of Pétrus Borel that Baudelaire modelled his own in his early youth, but his poetry bears more striking resemblances to the poems of Philothée O'Neddy than to those of the *lycanthrope*.

Philothée O'Neddy's one important collection of poems, *Feu et Flamme*, was published two years after *Les Rhapsodies* of Borel, and they correspond more nearly to the famous and notorious preface than do the rhapsodies themselves. The poems of O'Neddy are indeed 'slag and scum'. They are the most violent poems produced by the *Bouzingo* movement. O'Neddy, far more than Pétrus Borel, seems to have 'broyé du fer rouge'. Yet he did not enjoy the popularity nor the notoriety or fame of *Le Lycanthrope*. Perhaps this was because his personality was less flamboyantly picturesque. He had no pride and arrogance and he was too shy and modest to pose as a leader. The young take their contemporaries at their own valuation and Borel's valuation of himself was high.

Philothée O'Neddy began life with the more ordinary name of Théophile Dondey, before Romanticism made it suffer so strange a transformation. He was born in Paris in 1811. His father was a minor civil servant, employed at the Ministry of Finance, and although there was no wealth in the family there was no real need.

While still a pupil at the *Lycée-Louis-le-Grand*, he came under the influence of the *Globe*, the Liberal and Republican paper which attracted intelligent and progressive writers just before the Revolution of 1830.

On leaving school O'Neddy gravitated to the *Petit Cénacle* and became one of the planets revolving round the sun of Pétrus Borel. Like his friends and contemporaries he fought at the *Bataille d'Hernani*; like them also he was carried away by enthusiasm for the revolution. He was as bitterly disappointed as they with the results, and he shared Borel's desire for total destruction of society. Gautier, in his *Histoire du Romantisme*, has given a picture of O'Neddy at the time of *Les Bouzingos*. He was so dark skinned as to seem almost a mulatto, but, as a violent contrast, he had thick fair woolly hair and gentian blue eyes, extraordinarily beautiful blue eyes. His general appearance was that of a fair Moor and his friends used to call him the blond Othello. His eyes, clear and transparent, were so short-sighted as to seem almost sightless. He used to say that he was obliged to keep his glasses on at night in order to be able to see his dreams.

O'Neddy followed the example of his friends and wrote many poems between 1829 and 1830, but these were only published in 1833 under the title *Feu et Flamme*. Various circumstances hindered earlier publication. There was the revolution of 1830 and the cholera epidemic of 1832 in which he lost his father and with him the modest financial security he had hitherto enjoyed. His father had died after twenty-nine years of service, but as he was about to retire, and since he had died before reaching retiring age his wife did not receive his pension. O'Neddy was left as sole support of his mother and sister. He did not shrink from shouldering the burden; he became a civil servant as his father had been. The Ministry of Finance appointed him to the same post which his father had occupied and in it he remained until he himself reached retiring age. His friends were disappointed in him. They may have thought it was timidity, lack of confidence, fear of life, lack of belief in his own future which made him give up so quickly the literary struggle and settle down. To have been actuated by a bourgeois sense of family responsibility would have seemed to them incomprehensible and despicable.

On abandoning the *Bouzingo* life O'Neddy gave up also his flamboyant clothes, his coloured doublets and flowing capes. He

became a civil servant in a black suit with a stiff collar and neat tie, and spent the greater part of the day at his office.

Although he was now a despised *fonctionnaire*, O'Neddy determined to publish his collection of poems. Perhaps he hoped from them that they might bring him sufficient fame and wealth to cease being a civil servant. Printed by his cousin, Dondéy-Dupré, they appeared in August 1833. The edition was limited to three hundred copies and was paid for by the poet himself. The book, which is beautifully printed and has a frontispiece by Célestin Nanteuil, is one of the gems of Romantic publications and is eagerly sought after by connoisseurs.

The title *Feu et Flamme* was intended to startle the reader and to arouse curiosity. Daring also are the names of the separate poems. *Pandaemonium*, *Nécropolis*, *Succube*, *Incantation*, *Spleen*, *Névralgie*, and so forth. Borel's titles in *Rhapsodies* seem mild and inoffensive in comparison. In spite of all these efforts the book aroused little interest. Its fire and flame spluttered out without leaving sufficient light to illuminate the name of their author and he sank down into the darkness and oblivion of his government office. *La Revue Encyclopédique* did him the honour of attacking the book on the score of its offensiveness to standards of art and morality. The critic raised his voice to protest against all the empty and dangerous ideas which were being spread on the plea of freedom in art. O'Neddy tried to obtain the support of Chateaubriand for his little book by sending him a copy. But Chateaubriand, now an ageing and saddened man, was horrified at this unknown descendant of René. René now preached to his children and he told O'Neddy not to debase the gifts which Heaven had bestowed on him, but to respect Christianity and tradition.

The strongest impression which *Feu et Flamme* conveys is one of despair and rebellion. There is in the poems a bitterness and a spleen that surpasses anything written by Borel, and we have to wait until we reach Baudelaire to find the same anguish. Baudelaire does not mention *Feu et Flamme*, nevertheless the resemblance of some of his poems to those of O'Neddy seems too striking to be accidental. There are turns of phrase that are similar—sometimes identical—in both poets. 'Le terrible jamais vibre comme un tocsin', from *Névralgie* of O'Neddy, is a line that Baudelaire might have written. And was it O'Neddy's

'Puis-je assez te chérir mon ange, mon idole' from *Amour*, and  
 Mets tes yeux sur mes yeux. Donne à ma lèvre, donne  
 Ta lèvre séraphique, ô ma blanche madone

from the same poem which inspired Baudelaire's 'Je suis  
 l'Ange gardien, la Muse et la Madone', and

A l'ange, à l'idole immortelle  
 Salut en l'immortalité.

The lines from *Nécropolis*, by Philothée O'Neddy,

Plus de rages d'amour! le cœur stagnant et morne,  
 Ne se sent plus broyé par la dent du remords

recall the line from *L'Irréparable* of Baudelaire: 'L'irréparable  
 ronge avec sa dent maudite.' Another verse from O'Neddy's  
 poem,

Va que la mort soit ton refuge !  
 A l'exemple du Rédempteur,  
 Ose à la fois être le juge,  
 La victime et l'exécuteur.

recalls *L'Héautontimorouménos* of Baudelaire:

Je suis les membres et la roue,  
 Et la victime et le bourreau.

At eighteen Philothée O'Neddy suffered from the same *spleen*  
 as Baudelaire as a young man and his efforts at expression do not  
 compare unfavourably with those of his elder and more famous  
 successor. He writes in a poem which he, too, calls *Spleen*:

Oh! combien de mes jours le cercle monotone  
 Effare ma pensée et d'ennuis la couronne:  
 Que faire de mon âme et de ses saints transports,  
 Dans cet air étouffant qui pèse sur la ville,  
 Au milieu d'une foule insouciante et vile,  
 Où dort l'enthousiasme, où tous les cœurs sont morts!

The inspiration here is very similar to that of Baudelaire in his  
 various *Spleen* poems. One of these begins,

Quand le ciel bas et lourd pèse comme un couvercle  
 Sur l'esprit gémissant en proie aux longs ennus,  
 Et que de l'horizon embrassant tout le cercle  
 Il nous verse un jour plus triste que les nuits;

O'Neddy's poem ends:

Pleure, il faut te résoudre à languir dans les villes.  
 —Adieu l'enthousiasme—en des travaux serviles  
 On t'ensevelira, comme en un froid linceul.  
 Ah! pleure—mais tout bas, de peur que l'ironie  
 De misère et d'orgueil n'accuse ton génie.  
 —Et point d'amis!—il te faut pleurer seul.

In his depression O'Neddy longs for death as he longs for the embrace of a lover, longs for death as for the last refuge and peace. He sings of this longing for death in *Névralgie* and *Nécropolis*.

There is in O'Neddy's work, as there was to be in the early poems of Baudelaire, a love of satanism, of the occult—love potions and necromancy. In *Rhodomontade* he says that he will delve into magic and will mock the Lord by making a pact with the Devil; he says that he will call on Satan and sell his soul for a few years of happiness. His poems show the same mixture of good and evil, the same *spleen* and *idéal* which are so characteristic of Baudelaire. In *Delta* he writes:

C'est qu'à la fois je tiens du démon et l'ange!  
 C'est que, par un caprice intraduisible, étrange,  
 —Que tu concevras toi,  
 Mais qui susciterait des sots la pitié grave,—  
 Je veux être à la fois ton maître et ton esclave,  
 Ton vassal et ton roi.

For someone who did not know O'Neddy, these last two lines bear unmistakably the stamp of Baudelaire. They are very similar to the lines already quoted from *L'Héautontimorouménos*.

It is in their attitude to love that O'Neddy and Baudelaire are most alike. In the midst of the sentimental effusions of Romanticism O'Neddy did not consider love as a passion which ennobled everything and justified everything. Love was for him a violent poison, an evil brew from some sorcerer's cauldron which ended by destroying the sufferer. He expresses this feeling in *Eros* and with still greater force in *Amour*.

Laisse, fée aux yeux noirs, laisse mon corps jaloux,  
 Comme un serpent lascif, s'étendre à tes genoux!  
 Lorsque la vénusté de son éclat m'obombre,  
 Dieu seul de mes bonheurs pourrait dire le nombre.

Laisse ma tête en feu se serrant contre toi,  
 Caresser follement ta robe; laisse-moi  
 Sous l'amour de tes yeux qui me trempent de flamme,  
 Respirer comme un vague et saisissant dictame.  
 Que je boive à pleins bords l'oubli des mauvais jours!  
 Ma reine, dis-moi bien que tu sera toujours,  
 Dans les sables brûlants de ma vie agitée,  
 Mon ombreuse oasis et ma coupe enchantée.

The inspiration, imagery and rhythm of this passage are startlingly reminiscent of those of Baudelaire and there are as well lines that recall *Le Léthé* and *La Chevelure*. In this last poem Baudelaire wrote:

N'es-tu pas l'oasis où je rêve, et la gourde  
 Où je hume à longs traits le vin du souvenir?

Finally there is *Succube*, in which is collected a whole nosegay of *Fleurs du Mal*.

Je rêvais l'autre nuit, qu'aux splendeurs des orages,  
 Sur le parquet mouvant d'un salon de nuages,  
 De terreur et d'amour puissamment tourmenté,  
 Avec une lascive et svelte Bohémienne,  
 Dans une valse aérienne,  
 Ivre et fou j'étais emporté.  
 Comme mon bras cerclait sa taille fantastique,  
 D'un sein que le velours comprimait élastique.  
 Oh! comme j'aspirais les irritants parfums!  
 Et que j'étais heureux, lorsque, brusque et sauvage,  
 Le vent roulait sur mon visage  
 Les gerbes de ses cheveux bruns.

The pursuit becomes more wild and passionate and the lover more eager in his entreaties. Then, just as he thinks he is to receive the reward he has so long awaited, the vision changes.

Un fou rire le prit . . . rire désharmonique,  
 Digne de s'employer au banquet satanique.  
 J'eus le frisson, mes dents jetèrent des strideurs—  
 Puis soudain, plus de fée à lubrique toilette!  
 Plus rien dans mes bras qu'un squelette  
 M'étalant toutes ses hideurs!

Pour me débarrasser de sa luxure avide,  
 Je luttais vainement dans la brume livide;  
 De ses bras anguleux l'enlacement profond  
 S'incrustait dans mes chairs ruisselantes de fièvre,  
 Et les baisers aigus de sa bouche sans lèvre  
 M'incisaient la joue et le front.

Baudelaire has described a similar metamorphosis in *Les Métamorphoses du Vampire*, which ends:

Quand elle eut de mes os sucé toute la moelle,  
 Et que languissamment je me tournai vers elle  
 Pour lui rendre un baiser d'amour, je ne vis plus  
 Qu'une outre aux flancs gluants, toute pleine de pus!  
 Je fermai les deux yeux, dans ma froide épouvante,  
 Et quand je les rouvris à la clarté vivante,  
 A mes côtés, au lieu du mannequin puissant  
 Qui semblait avoir fait provision de sang,  
 Tremblaient confusément des débris de squelette,  
 Qui d'eux-mêmes rendaient le cri d'une girouette  
 Ou d'une enseigne, au bout d'une tringle de fer,  
 Que balance le vent pendant les nuits d'hiver.

There is no need to exaggerate the debt which Baudelaire may owe to Philothée O'Neddy, and theses for French university doctorates tend to lay too much stress on what are called the 'sources' of a writer's inspiration. The poems of *Feu et Flamme* might have been written by a young and clumsy Baudelaire—not that the mature work of Baudelaire is always exempt from clumsiness—but it should be remembered that their author was only eighteen when he composed them and that the few poems we have from Baudelaire's pen at that age are inferior in originality and technical mastery. If this collection were now discovered, without any author's name, it could easily be imagined that there were early *Fleurs du Mal* and critics would see in them promise and proof of Baudelaire's later genius. What is generally called Baudelairian atmosphere, mood and psychology existed already in a marked degree in the poems of *Feu et Flamme*.

The civil service killed Philothée O'Neddy as a poet and there is little more to relate of him during the years which followed the publication of *Feu et Flamme*. He dropped the name of O'Neddy and returned to his original name of Dondey de

Santeney. Under that name he published short stories of no great value and a novel in the romantic vein called *L'Anneau Enchanté*: a romance of chivalry. For a short period he was dramatic critic on the paper, *La Patrie*, but he resigned on account of a difference of opinion with the editor concerning what was legitimate in criticism. He continued to write poetry until 1846, but he did not publish any of it. It was printed posthumously but it is of little literary value. Many of the poems are said to have been inspired by a passionate episode, but love was not able to raise his writing above triviality and banality. Only one of them deserves notice, a sonnet written shortly before he died, which shows genuine feeling. It has the anguished bitterness and pessimism of *Feu et Flamme*.

Le Vrai, c'est l'incertain, le Vrai, c'est l'ignorance,  
 C'est le tâtonnement dans l'ombre et dans l'erreur;  
 C'est un concert de fête avec un fond d'horreur,  
 C'est le neutre, l'oubli, le froid, l'indifférence.

After 1846 nothing more is heard of him in the world of letters. Then, in 1867, at the 'reprise' of *Hernani*, he appears again. Auguste Vacquerie, brother of Victor Hugo's son-in-law, relates how a distinguished elderly bourgeois came with a request for a 'billet de faveur' for the first night. When asked for his name he gave that of Philothée O'Neddy, famous at the *Bataille d'Hernani* nearly forty years before, and Vacquerie hastened to grant his wish, thinking it right that the man who had fought on the day of battle should now be a witness of the apotheosis.

O'Neddy lived out the remaining days of his life in quiet obscurity in Paris with his widowed mother and spinster sister. He never married. His mother died in 1861 after being totally paralysed for five years. Then he continued to live with his sister, but with his mother the only person he had ever loved and who had loved him died. There was no true companionship and understanding between himself and his sister. The blame for this must, in part, be attributed to him since he did everything to prevent her becoming a full adult human being. In a letter to a close friend he confessed that he had realized from early youth that she would never marry and that his aim had always been to 'rendre son célibat calme et digne.' That he had never invited

home his friends from the outside world who might unsettle her or cause her vain regrets. 'Je pensais, et je pense encore, qu'il est à propos pour la dignité et la tranquillité du douloureux état de vieille fille, de maintenir autour du lui quelque chose de claustral. J'y tâchai donc, en ne laissant arriver à elle, dans les discours et dans les livres, que rarement et avec grand croix, les trop magnifiques puissances de la Vie, même les plus hautes et les plus pures.' It was small wonder that in their relationship there was something 'neutre et morne.' 'Ce qu'il y a de mieux désormais' he adds 'c'est l'ombre et le silence'. There was to be nearly fifteen more years of this 'ombre et silence'.

In 1873 he was himself struck down by paralysis and was nursed by his sister until his death. Illness seemed to change the law-abiding bourgeois and released the fires of his youth that had been kept down for so long, but only in bitterness and destruction. All those who came into contact with him said that his character had been changed—perhaps it had only been uncovered and allowed to have release. In the last few years he was gloomy, morose, bitter and violent in his views. He had returned to the spirit of *Feu de Flamme*. He died in 1875 in the sixty-fifth year of his age.

Both Pétrus Borel and Philothée O'Neddy were poets of the restless years of the July Monarchy, of the anarchy which disappeared after 1835. Then the other *Bouzingos*, weary of horror and sadism, were drawn, in the wake of Gautier, towards the Hellenic revival and this current was followed by most young writers of the day. In 1836 the last republican revolt and attempt on the life of the King occurred and this was suppressed with great severity. This marks the end of the republican movement and of the period of revolt. Thenceforth Louis Philippe was accepted and the country settled down to make money and to build up the prosperity of the nation. In 1836 Gautier's novel, *Mademoiselle de Maupin*, appeared and its preface served as the manifesto of the new school of poetry, the school of classical beauty, measure and balance.

The *Bouzingo* movement, though it lasted so short a time, is not without importance and the names of Pétrus Borel and Philothée O'Neddy should not be forgotten since Baudelaire, ten years later, when he began his literary career, was attracted by their writings whereas he poured scorn on the more fashionable classical revival.

A. H. HOURANI

# WHERE SHALL JOHN GO?

## V—SYRIA

MY DEAR JOHN,

You ask me whether you should live in Syria once the war is over and the world safe for the moneyed traveller; but I cannot answer simply and without reservations, because I do not know the reason for which you want to leave England. Is it that you belong to the class of English intellectuals who cannot live in their own country: because they cannot endure being, as intellectuals, merely marginal to the main currents of English life, outsiders existing on sufferance; or because they wish to avoid all personal relations except those few which they deliberately choose and cultivate, and thus prefer to conduct the ordinary business of life through the veil of a foreign language and with people so unfamiliar that they need be regarded as no more than creatures of make-believe? Or perhaps in the romantic fashion you are eager for new sensations, a new background against which to see yourself? Or else (and this I hope is the truth of the matter) you believe that England, and that you in particular, have a duty to the outside world, and are searching for a field in which to perform it.

Most probably, however, you do not yet know exactly why you want to go, but are only conscious of an undefined desire to go abroad, of a longing for the unfamiliar and exotic, born of five cramped years in a beleaguered fortress. You are ready for anything: to steer your life by any motive and to any goal. It is only later, after the longing is sated and the first excitement has died down, that your motives will become clear to you. In this undecided and receptive state of spirit, what are you likely to find in Syria?

Broadly speaking, there are two general ways in which you can approach the country; which of them you choose will depend on your temperament and the content of your romanticism. (Being a twentieth-century Englishman, you can hardly be expected not to be a romantic, especially about the Arab world.) They may be called the way of the settled lands and the way of the Beduin.

If you take the first way, you will probably make your headquarters in Beirut, where you can have the amenities of Mediterranean life and where before the war living was very cheap, and may be so again. From Beirut you will make expeditions to the Lebanese mountains, into the Syrian interior and over the borders into Palestine and Transjordan, which geographically are the same country as Syria. Your main concern will be to taste the best Syria can offer, in beauties of nature and building, historic associations, food and drink, society and culture. I think you will find much to please you. First, natural beauties: the Lebanese mountains, long snow-topped ridges falling in terraces of vines and olives almost sheer to the Mediterranean; the green and level plain of the Biqa, like an English county with its brooks and trees; Mount Hermon, gracious and austere; the rolling endless plains of the interior; the fruit-trees and running waters of the Damascene oasis. (It is said that the Prophet refused to enter Damascus, fearing that having seen it he should be less enamoured of Paradise.)

Man has improved what nature gave him. A thousand curious and lovely buildings, in every region of the land, keep fresh the memory of Syria's many ages. Some are too well known to need my praise: without my telling, you will be wise enough to visit the classic splendour of Baalbek and Palmyra, and of Jerash in Transjordan, and to explore the Crusader Castles. Again, what need is there for me to mention Damascus and Jerusalem (except to point to beauties you might overlook, such as the little mosque of Sultan Selim in Damascus, with its cloister and fountain, more like an Oxford college than anything else I have seen in the Arab East). Such known beauties I can leave aside; but it is worth while to draw your attention to a few places you might miss. For example, there are the black basalt cities of Jebel Druze: Qanawat, Shahba, Bosra-Eski-Sham. Built on the edge of the sown area, as long as the Roman peace protected them they were centres of trade and government. (Bosra even gave Rome an Emperor, Philip the Arabian.) Their streets, courthouses, theatres and reservoirs are perfectly preserved, and a few villagers still live incongruously amidst such grandeur. Then also you must not forget to visit Aleppo, the cleanest and best built of Syrian towns: it has marvellous vaulted bazaars, and its modern parts, too, are worth seeing. They are uniformly built of a golden stone which

gleams brightly in the early sun, and remind me, in their solid regularity, of some German city vaguely remembered from summer tours: perhaps Mannheim as it used to be.

There is not one of these cities, and not one yard of Syrian ground, which can be without interest to the traveller with a sense of the past. It does not matter what period pleases your taste. North of Beirut the Nahr Ibrahim still runs red every year with the blood of Adonis, slain by the boar in the gorge of Afqa. Just beyond the present Syrian frontier you may visit what is left of Antioch and the groves of Daphne. It was in Antioch that men were first called Christians, and the whole drama of the Incarnation, of eternity breaking in upon time, played itself out among the southern Syrian hills. (It would be silly to write upon Syria and not mention its main importance for mankind. There is a spiritual geography of the world, and in it Syria has a tragic and exalted place. Here men saw God walking among them, but here, too, they killed Him.) Later, great theological dissensions tore the towns and left their mark in sects which still cling to doctrines long ago condemned as heresies by the rest of Christendom; and the waste places were made sweet by monks and hermits. Just north of Aleppo you can still see the pillar on which St. Simeon Stylites, a most attractive character, spent half his lifetime for the glory of God.

When you have meditated a little how much Syria meant to Rome and Christendom, you may pass on and reflect what it has meant in Moslem and Arab history. Damascus is full of Umayyad, Aleppo of Hamdanid memories. In the former, Al Ghazali passed a phase of his spiritual odyssey, which gave us the only Arabic autobiography able to stand by St. Augustine's *Confessions*; in the latter, Al-Mutanabbi wrote his odes. On the road between the two lies Maara, the birthplace of the blind poet Abu'l-Ala, the most free-thinking of Arabic poets.

Then again, everywhere you will be reminded of the romantic English and French travellers of the nineteenth century. How many great and eccentric figures wandered among the Lebanese hills, in the bazaars or through the deserts: Lamartine, De Nerval and Renan loved Syria and wrote of it. From England came Lady Hester Stanhope, who played at deity on a hill near Saida, Lady Ellenborough who married a Beduin Shaykh, Burton who was Consul in Damascus, Doughty, Gertrude Bell, Lawrence—

the list could extend itself almost without limit. My own favourite is Colonel Churchill, that strange offshoot of a strange family, who spent half his life among the Druzes of Lebanon, and married a princess of the old ruling family of the mountains. (There is a distinguished old gentleman in Cairo who still remembers, as a bright picture from his childhood, that tall military figure who walked on a hill above Beirut and wept among the widows of Hasbeya as they sat mourning their husbands, killed in the massacre of 1860.) Many of these people wrote books. Of all that literature, *Seven Pillars of Wisdom* seems to me the work of the most exalted genius, Volney's *Voyage en Egypte et en Syrie* the most balanced and penetrating, and Barrès' *Enquête au Pays du Levant* the silliest.

To turn to other pleasures. The food of Syria is best eaten in Damascus. Other towns and districts have one dish for which they are known, but everything is good in Damascus. Try particularly the rice-dishes, the sweetmeats, the ice cream made with snow from Mount Hermon, the fruit-syrups, and the Arab coffee flavoured with cardamom seed. (The best Oriental restaurant in the town is probably the 'Restaurant des Princes' in Suq Hamidiah.) As for drinks, the Syrian 'Araq' is the best in the world. Not much wine is made, although the Lebanese grapes are good; but some of the Catholic monasteries in Lebanon and the Biqa do produce an excellent wine, both white and red. It is best drunk in the famous Hotel Masabki, at Shtoura on the road to Damascus.

I could tell you also, did space permit, of the thousand little pleasures of sight, sound and smell which come upon you by the way: the Roman waterwheels which hum all day and night in Hama, most unexpected and overpoweringly lovely of towns; the changing colours on Mount Hermon, in the evening as the sun sets; the heavy scent of jasmine hanging on the walls of Beirut; the clusters of women, heraldically graceful and dressed in white, around the wells in Jebel Druze; fresh water in the wastes; the coffee-houses in the mountain villages, where one sits out the endless summer afternoon, playing tric-trac and drinking black coffee to the sound of tangos and Egyptian songs transmitted by a brassy gramophone.

When you are tired of wandering you may want to settle for a time in one place, to absorb its spirit. Perhaps you will choose

a Lebanese village, with its freeholding and educated farmers, its returned emigrants from North or South America, and its discontented and self-divided youth (the Arabic word 'Shabab' much more than our 'youth' implies a collectivity, a coherent social force: the concept of 'Ash-Shabab Al-Muthaqqaqaf', the élite of cultivated youth, is in everybody's mind and mouth). If you prefer a town, you can study either the Arab life of Damascus or the Levantine life of Beirut. Each has its advantages. The former has roots, solidity, aristocratic manners, more self-possession: the latter is rootless and feverish, a life lived on the precarious margin where two worlds meet. But Beirut has this advantage, that the seclusion of women has almost gone, and so society in the Western sense is possible. In Damascus, and still more in the smaller towns of the interior, women are still only a little way out of their bonds; but the cinema is fast changing that.

If you care to look, in both Beirut and Damascus (but more in Beirut) you will find a vivid intellectual life. Even if you will not at first be able to read what the Arabic writers produce, you will be able to talk to them, since the greater number are French or American-educated. The older ones may have drawn their ideas and images mainly from Arab history and poetry; but the younger generation owe more to the French nineteenth century, to Nietzsche, Dostoievsky and Shakespeare. Perhaps the Syrian writing of the last three generations has not produced much which would interest the outer world (except the mystical writings and drawings of Jibran, but the best of them were written in English in America); it has, however, played a vital part in the awakening of the Arab mind, and more particularly in two processes: the understanding of Western civilization and the elaboration of a modern Arabic prose-style. Most of the great figures of this movement are dead—the scholars of the Yaziji and Bustani families, the Syrian journalists and encyclopædist of Cairo; but you will still find distinguished and interesting figures. There is by the way a very well-written left-wing magazine in Beirut, *Al Tariq*, which will console you if your HORIZON fails to arrive.

What will perhaps surprise and interest you more is to find an exotic flower of French literature flourishing in Beirut. It is tended mainly by Lebanese Catholics and Uniates, and on the whole is linked with that group of Lebanese Christians who

insist on the special value and tradition of Lebanon, on its consequent need for autonomy and even, in the more extreme cases, its special 'Phœnician' origins. Some of the works of this school are worth tasting: for example, the poems of Charles Corm.

It may be, however, that all this is of no concern to you. You may say that you do not go to the East to discover what you can enjoy nearer home: good food and drink, good company, the beauties of nature and history. Perhaps you are in flight from these very things, and seek barenness, space, solitude, a life reduced to fundamentals but saved from barbarism by poetry and honour. Then you should go to the Beduin of the Syrian Desert. I must confess I do not know exactly how you will set about it. Perhaps you could excavate a Roman site, or perhaps take service with an oil company; or it might be simpler to make friends with one of the Beduin Shaykhs who have become accustomed, these latter years, to haunt the Orient Palace Hotel in Damascus, walking round the ballroom and looking at the dancers with a not wholly disinterested eye.

In one way or another, you will probably succeed in your attempt; so let us imagine you some day, sitting in a tent of camel's hair, drinking coffee and talking about horses, genealogies and world politics with Arab chiefs. Will you find in this life all that you expected from it? That depends, of course, on what image of the desert you brought with you. I do not mean to imply that you expect the Balliol-educated shaykh of Ouida, or the glamorous 'sheek' of Hollywood. It is possible, however, that you have read the marvellous distorted picture of Arab life in *Seven Pillars*, without correcting it by the no less marvellous but objective picture in *Arabia Deserta*, and you will therefore expect a more obvious grandeur, a more intense and continuous excitement, than the life of the desert can give. You may be shocked at first (unless you were with the Eighth Army in Libya) by its dirt and dullness. It is dirty because water is very scarce; dull because the desert Arab now has no occupation except breeding camels for a shrinking market. With the extension of the civil authority and the coming of the motor car and aeroplane, the Beduin can no longer raid each other or the settled country as easily and frequently as before. And yet, beneath the squalor, there are beauty and splendour no less attractive than those you

imagined. No one who has known the Beduin, however slightly, can fail to respect and admire them. They have great qualities: personal freedom from all bonds except that tribal loyalty which they willingly accept; personal equality among themselves, and extending to foreigners and outsiders who can adopt their way of life; directness and frankness of approach; an overwhelming love of language, story and poetry. (I have heard it said that the Arabs have no art. Nothing could be further from the truth. The Arabs are primarily artists, but all their creative power has been directed to one object, the Arabic language, that wonderful ocean of a language.)

Better or worse, the Arabs are certainly different from other peoples, and it is among the Beduin that you can see the differences most clearly, can recognize the marks which have been printed upon them by the discipline of the desert. For example, the primacy of will over understanding and thus the tendency for every contact of minds to become a conflict of wills, for every statement to become a challenge ('contradict me if you dare'); the subsumption of all moral notions under the categories of loyalty and honour; the absence of any idea of causality, the view of every act as a complete and isolated whole; the respect for learning and for age, the love of moral commonplaces, the direct issue of emotion in act or at least in gesture; the absence of the Western concepts of 'the boring' and 'the interesting' (there is no word for 'interesting' in Arabic).

I have touched only the corner of the subject, and no more than hinted at what you will find in Syria. I could go on in the same vein, and tell you about political movements, about Christian and Moslem sects, about Arab sociology. But I prefer to use what space is left to give you two pieces of good advice.

First, try not to develop an opinion about the Arabs until you have known them for a long time. It is very easy, in dealing with a foreign people, and especially one so unlike your own, to give up the attempt to understand them after a time, and to erect temporary conclusions you have reached into permanent dogmas, which may themselves after a time become no more than a form of words to be recited whenever the subject is raised. In the last seven years I seem to have met an unusually large number of people who settled themselves comfortably in armchairs

and made long speeches beginning ‘In my humble opinion what the Arabs need is——’ (I have not observed that the genuine British experts on the Arabs ever use this form of address.) I dare not think how many authorities on the Middle East there will be after this war; please do not add to their number until you are certain that you have seen more than the façade of Arab civilization.

Secondly, do not regard yourself as being in Syria only to take what she can give you, to appreciate her richness, to use her as a background for your thoughts and sensations. Remember that Syria is a living country, not a museum or a creature of fantasy, and that with living beings one’s relations are first of all moral. If you live in Syria and take from her, you will acquire, whether you like it or not, a duty towards her.

The Syrian people, like all the Arab peoples, are in an abnormal condition which affects every corner of their life, and from which they cannot be rescued without the help of cultivated Europeans like you. Once they had a civilization which was their own. Its moral principles they understood and accepted because they themselves had helped to mould them. They were at home in their world. But in the last hundred years that old world has been dying. Through travel, through commerce, through foreign schools and through the imposition of a foreign government, the West has made its inroads. Syrians thus find themselves torn between two worlds; they can deny neither of them, but so far they have not been able to mould them together into a unity. A new type has grown up: the educated youth, rootless, humiliated, often in despair, conscious of problems too vast for them to solve, eager for change, eager to make something of their nation and to mean something in the world. In every field of life—political, social, economic, intellectual and spiritual—they are trying to create a world of their own out of their traditions and the new ideas and processes which they are receiving from the West. (The Arab nationalist movement is only the political phase of this all-embracing process.)

The new world, however, may take different forms. It may be a world in which only the means of material strength are drawn from the West, and the spirit of Europe with all its lovely works is rejected; or else it may be a world which, while not

a slavish imitation of Europe, has been generated through a profound love of the Western spirit and intellect (just as the Russia of today could not have arisen except through generations of passionate love of Europe, a love which was nevertheless always creative and grounded in self-knowledge and self-respect).

I can see these two unborn worlds struggling with one another for birth in the Arab East; and I know which of them I want to triumph. With all my heart I want the Arabs to become part of our European community, and give something of their own to it. Yet sometimes I ask myself, 'Is it possible?' I am not certain how to answer my question, but of one thing I am certain: the Arabs will never know and love Europe until Europe comes to them and is embodied for them in cultivated human beings, who are prepared to spend their whole lives communicating by precept and example the spirit of that civilization which has made them what they are. This is not a task which anyone can perform. If you are to succeed, you must have very special qualities of mind. You must have a clear idea of Europe as a unity, and a standard of what is valuable in Western culture. At the same time, however, you must try to think yourself out of your own rich and ripe tradition, in which everything important has been discovered and expressed and nothing remains except to enjoy the works of the past, to embroider old things and to explore the more recondite sensations, into a world in which everything is still to be done and said, the enthusiasm and the crudity of youth still exist, and the epic can still be lived, imagined and written. You must accustom yourself to a way of thinking more naïve and direct, more profound in its questionings and its despair, more dogmatic in its beliefs than your own. Above all, you must practise virtue: patience, humility, charity.

At this point you interrupt me with your doubts. Do such men exist in England? If they exist, is not England herself in need of them? Is it not asking too great a sacrifice to expect them to leave the centres of European culture? My dear John, I am aware of such problems and have thought about them; but I leave you to answer them for yourself.



One of Mrs. Duncan's 'spirit' forms  
*(observe the coat-hanger shoulders)*



A 'spirit' appears in the cabinet  
(note the pin stuck in the door)

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